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ABSTRACT

The ways in which a paradigm of empowerment can be adopted in schools are explored in this book. The book is divided into two sections--the importance of being a paradigm pioneer and the Future Empowerment Paradigm--and focuses on four points: (1) The systemic inertia that keeps schools tied to a familiar, comfortable, unproductive, and self-reinforcing legacy of old practices and structures; (2) the history and defining elements of the Future Empowerment Paradigm of educational reform that was driven underground in the early 1990s; (3) the major losses educators have suffered as individuals, as a profession, and as an institution because of the lost paradigm; and (4) what local educational leaders can do to establish the learning success and life performance elements of the Future Empowerment Paradigm. The chapters focus on the power of paradigms, the lost ideal of education, how to establish an empowering learning community, how to design student empowerment outcomes, and how to chart a course toward future empowerment. (Contains 34 references.) (RJM)

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PARADIGM LOST

Reclaiming America's Educational Future

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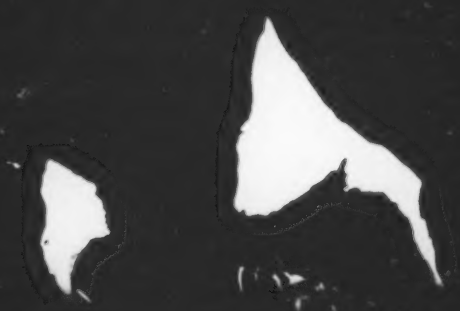

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WILLIAM G. SPADY

WITH FOREWORD BY PAUL D. HOUSTON

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PARADIGM LOST

Reclaiming America's Educational Future

WILLIAM G. SPADY

American Association of School Administrators

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to five close friends and colleagues who shared my vision for America's schools, stood by me during my most discouraging hours, inspired and challenged my thinking, and provided deep and joyful connection in all aspects of my life.

Ronald Brandt

Arnold Burron

Charles Schwahn

Karolyn Snyder

Bruce Wenger

William Spady

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Reclaiming America's Educational Future

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The encouragement and direct assistance of many friends and colleagues led to the ultimate development and production of this book.

First, I want to deeply thank AASA's key administrators, Paul Houston and Joe Schneider, for their understanding of the many dilemmas facing public education today and for their courage and willingness to sponsor this endeavor. Without their initial encouragement and continuing support, it is highly unlikely that I would have written *Paradigm Lost*. I hope that its substance does justice to their confidence in me.

Second, I am deeply indebted to a host of friends and family members who took the time to scrutinize the multiple drafts of this manuscript. Their candid and perceptive views of its accuracy, readability, fluency, and relevance helped me enormously. Chaim Adler, Ron Brandt, Arni Burron, Karen and Larry Gallio, Kandace Laass, Chuck Schwahn, Sha Spady, and Bruce Wenger get gold stars and deep gratitude for their extremely helpful comments at all stages of this work. Without Arni's insights and feedback from "The Right," and his enormous support and encouragement during my darkest hours, this book wouldn't have happened.

Third, the extraordinary collaboration I have had with Chuck Schwahn over the past dozen years has contributed immeasurably to my growth and success as a professional. He has never wavered in his exceptional devotion to quality, honesty, and professionalism, and he has been the consummate contributor — always managing an inspiring level of new ideas, constructive criticism, insightful advice, and deep affection. His influence on this work has been profound.

Finally, one could not hope to find a better editor than Ginger O'Neil. Ginger offered the perfect balance between insightful critic, informed expert, and enthusiastic supporter. Her warmth, openness to novel possibilities, and win-win orientation made writing and rewriting incredibly easy. Thanks also to Vanessa Spady. She always brought her original and highly professional touch to her Dad's most commonplace ideas about the layout of diagrams and figures. Deepest thanks to both.

FOREWORD

Much of Bill Spady's life's work has involved going out on a limb. While that's a dangerous place to be, it's also where one finds the sweetest fruit. In *Paradigm Lost*, Bill once again forges into new territory by attempting to pull together the key pieces related to educational improvement for educators. The result is a book that every educator and board member should read and take to heart. *Paradigm Lost* portrays a unique, rich, and penetrating picture of four key things:

- The systemic inertia that keeps our schools tied to a familiar, comfortable, unproductive, and self-reinforcing legacy of old practices and structures that resists all attempts at systemic change;
- The history and defining elements of a powerful Future Empowerment paradigm of educational reform that America was on the verge of embracing until we let the forces of reaction drive it underground in the early 1990s;
- The major losses we have suffered as individuals, as a profession, and as an institution because of the lost paradigm; and
- What local educational leaders can strategically do to establish the learning success and life performance elements of this badly needed Future Empowerment paradigm in their communities.

This is more than a lament about the loss of outcome-based education by the man who is universally regarded as the concept's leading advocate. Bill Spady gives us an extremely comprehensive, insightful, and personal look at the much larger picture of major educational reform over the past quarter century; the key ideas and players that challenged our "Iceberg Paradigm" of schooling and defined the push for greater learning success in all of America's schools; the issues underlying the attacks we have experienced for the past several years on virtually everything remotely connected to learning outcomes for students; and a powerful and practical set of future-focused strategic design and strategic alignment tools that local districts can use to get their schools and communities on the road to genuine future empowerment.

I challenge those who think they've been there and done that with either OBE, curriculum reform, or performance assessment to tackle the double paradigm shift described in Chapter 2. At its core is Spady's unique insight about the educentric perspective that we educators all share, a perspective

that results in all of our attempts to reform and improve schools starting with the way schools are (and how they've always been) — the essence of educentrism — instead of with a clear picture of the future our students face and must shape. As the saying goes, "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten." But if we would start with the future, Spady compellingly argues in Chapters 7, 8, and 9, we'd never invent the kinds of learning systems we have inherited from past generations and seem determined to preserve.

Not surprisingly, then, *Paradigm Lost* is filled with powerful and practical insights about the systemic nature of schools and the beliefs and assumptions on which they operate; the conditions of success that must be enhanced to ensure greater learning success for our students; the fears and motivations of those who attack progressive reforms; the status of various local, state, and national reform efforts today; and — most of all — insights about what local leaders can do to establish true learning communities based on future-focused thinking, planning, curriculum design, instruction, assessment, and improvement strategies in their schools.

Paradigm Lost is a great gift to education leaders from a man who has risen above professional and personal loss and stigmatization in recent years to give us a masterful portrayal of an educational future we should be proud as leaders to reclaim and even prouder to achieve.

Paul D. Houston
Executive Director
American Association of School Administrators

PREFACES

"This man has been described as a socialist, a communist, a globalist, a one-worlder, a new-ager; as anti-Christian, anti-traditional values, anti-family, unamerican, diabolical, duplicitous, subversive; and with a host of other pejoratives."

With these words, I introduced my then-colleague-now-friend Bill Spady to an audience of several hundred public school professionals who had come to hear about a new, common ground movement upon which Bill and his erstwhile adversary Bob Simonds, of Citizens for Excellence in Education notoriety, had embarked.

Glancing down at Bill, I continued, "Did I leave anything out?"

"Yes," Bill replied, to the delight of the audience. "You forgot to mention that I'm bald!"

But there was also much more that was left out of the description that day: That the man who had been the unfair target of more pejoratives than any other education reformer since John Dewey could more accurately have been described as an honest, caring, open-minded professional. That he was sincerely interested in achieving the best education possible for all of the constituents of the public schools. That he was willing to defend his ideas in fair and open debate with his critics. That his visionary perspectives had been appropriated—highjacked would be a more accurate term—by a cadre of social engineers who had contaminated and perverted his sound ideas in pursuit of their own agendas and forced him to unfairly "take the rap" for their misapplication of the principles of outcome-based education. And that he had not tried to blame others for the widespread attacks on OBE when he could accurately have done so.

What also could have been said was that Bill Spady's openness and willingness to listen to people like me—Traditionalist Christians—attested to his personal and professional integrity and honesty—qualities that will carry the day in what may well turn out to have an even greater impact on the public schools of America than his original work in systemic reform—the achievement of common ground among America's contending constituencies.

In many ways, this book is a "handbook" toward achieving that end.

Arnold Burron
Director, Center for Constructive Agreement
University of Northern Colorado • Greeley, Colorado

A Superintendent's Take on *Paradigm Lost*

"The way we DO SCHOOLS used to make sense. It doesn't anymore. But we're still doing it anyway.

"Our schools made sense when we didn't know that *all students can learn*... but now we know better.

"Our schools made sense when we knew little about how the brain works and how students learn... but now we know much more about both.

"Our schools made sense when sorting students for the job market could still ensure the good life for all — but it doesn't anymore.

"Our schools made sense in the Industrial Age — but they don't in the Information Age.

"The way we DO SCHOOLS used to make sense... it doesn't anymore."

• • •

I would welcome anyone to challenge Bill Spady to a debate on this point of view. Anyone able to put aside tradition, political bias, and fear long enough to be logical would have to agree that schools are implementing only a fraction of what we know about students and learning, about teachers and teaching, and about effective schools and effective organizations. You just can't *do for* students what we know they need to function successfully in a highly competitive and rapidly changing world, while insisting that schools and school districts retain the structures, policies, and practices of the Industrial Age. Period.

I first met and heard Bill Spady in the Black Hills of South Dakota in the mid '70s. He explained a simple matrix for education that put time on one axis and outcomes on the other. As he spoke, I came to realize that schools were structurally set with time as the constant and student learning as the variable. Bill argued, rather emotionally as I recall, for a reversal of that priority, which would make student learning the constant and time the variable. It hit me. I got it. I have not been the same since.

Since that time, Bill has gone on to describe and define an approach to schooling — The Future Empowerment Paradigm — that allows and encourages our profession and professionals to implement the very best that we know about students and learning, teachers and teaching, and effective organizations. Our profession does not have another model or approach that can make that claim. True, the Effective Schools movement has been a bright light, but it tinkers with, rather than systematically

changing, the system. It still gives in to structures, policies, and processes that restrict students, teachers, and schools. The same can be said about Accelerated Schools, about the Coalition of Essential Schools, and about numerous other reform movements and organizations. Transformational outcome-based education (Oops, Oops… Can I say those words?) is the only PARADIGM SHIFTER. And I strongly believe that it is the only paradigm that will allow me to confidently call education a "profession."

We lost our profession in 1994. We educators, we educational leaders, we educational associations, we superintendents caved in. We let a relatively small group of people who were ill-informed, dishonest, mean spirited, and paranoid stop a movement in its tracks that held great promise for empowering learners and bringing education into the Information Age. It was a sad time for me and I have not yet recovered. I was forced to admit that what I had called *my profession* was no more than a politically directed bureaucracy. True professions (1) act on their client's needs, (2) promote and use their own research to improve their services, and (3) embrace accountability. At present, our system of schools does none of the three — The Future Empowerment Paradigm Bill describes in this book totally nails them all.

Now you don't have to establish Bill's Future Empowerment Paradigm to be professional, but you *do* have to focus on clients rather than politics, you *do* have to follow your own research rather than be told how to teach by groups of political paranoids, and you *do* have to be honest about and take credit or blame for student learning.

I'm an eternal optimist. And when I read *Paradigm Lost*, I got "pumped" again. Bill has spelled out a clear — and somewhat complex — approach that we can take if we wish to regain our lost paradigm.

My advice to today's superintendents — those who believe that the Future Empowerment Paradigm is critical and who believe education must become a profession — is to make *Paradigm Lost* must reading for principals, teachers, board members, and any community members who could be of support. (I would especially target those YUPPIES who know the Information Age through their businesses and professions, but do not seem to believe that schools deserve the same paradigm transformations that have allowed their businesses to compete in today's global market.) Superintendents are called upon to be the lead learners and to create learning organizations. This is our chance to model the values

and principles of your district and our profession to colleagues, staff, and the community.

I also encourage superintendents to create a true dialogue about the Future Empowerment Paradigm throughout their entire systems. I would have everyone come to know what the paradigm is, how it is aligned with what we know about learning, and how it compares to present practices.

It won't be easy, but it will be satisfying. It won't be pleasant, but it will be a professional response. It won't be quick, but it will add meaning to your work days. Education is the most important work of the world and I believe that the Future Empowerment Paradigm must start with the leader, the CEO, the lead learner, the visionary leader… the superintendent.

Chuck Schwahn
Schwahn Leadership Associates

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING A PARADIGM PIONEER

CHAPTER 1

THE POWER OF PARADIGMS

Paradigms are fundamentally about how we view and perceive our world and what we allow ourselves to see as true, possible, or desirable. When shared and endorsed, they shape the thinking patterns, beliefs, and cultures of family groups, friendship networks, formal organizations, professional associations, and even entire societies. These patterns of thought help us understand, interpret, and make sense of what we later do and experience. Some people think of paradigms as governing beliefs we use to determine true from false, relevant from irrelevant, important from unimportant, and safe from dangerous. Others describe them as systems of screens and filters we use to block out or disregard that which we don't readily recognize or agree with.

Clearly, paradigms are powerful. But there is more, and it's even more important. Paradigms also determine how we behave; our paradigms shape our habits of behavior and decision making. What we do and the alternatives we allow ourselves to consider and choose are governed—that is, are limited and constrained—by what we allow ourselves to "see" as possible or desirable. When we make decisions and act in ways consistent with those familiar and comfortable patterns of thinking, we confirm their validity and usefulness for us, which further reinforces their influence on our way of viewing and dealing with the world.

Paradigm Paralysis

Joel Barker, who has written extensively on the power of paradigms and the problems of paradigm paralysis, uses the example of the wristwatch in his 1990 videotape "Discovering the Future" to explain the need to thoughtfully reevaluate paradigms. Until the 1980s, the Swiss were the recognized masters of making clocks and watches and controlled the world market. Their paradigm: A watch is a tiny clock, requiring the same components as a clock—springs, gears, and hands—but all in miniature. Because of this viewpoint, the Swiss rejected using the quartz crystal technology that their own researchers pioneered because they

saw no connection between it and timepieces. But Texas Instruments did, and so did the Japanese — with enthusiasm! The rest is history.

As a result of this paradigm paralysis, the Swiss watch industry almost collapsed. Today, as Barker points out, the Swiss are selling beautiful jewelry that also keeps time, and the Japanese are selling nearly all of the world's watches.

Systemic Paradigm Shifts

What this Swiss watch example illustrates, and Thomas Kuhn's (1970) pioneering work asserts, is that paradigms apply to and affect not only our individual patterns of thought and action, but entire systems of thinking and behavior in organizations, industries, fields of endeavor, countries, and cultures. Changes in the thinking and actions of single individuals — usually those recognized as innovators, pioneers, or even revolutionaries — can, if sound and compelling enough, eventually shift the operating paradigms of organizations, institutions, and entire societies. Shifts of this potential magnitude and impact are called "systemic" because they affect the fundamental functioning of major social and organizational entities. Such shifts in education are reliant upon school leaders willing to thoughtfully examine the paradigm of schooling.

Systemic paradigm shifts change the way major systems work, the goals they pursue, and the structures they create, including the:

- Knowledge base on which the system depends,
- Techniques and technologies used,
- Roles and responsibilities people assume,
- Status and influence people acquire,
- Expectations and standards that shape individual and group performance,
- Outcomes and results the system achieves,
- Nature and patterns of human interaction and relationships, and
- Ultimate meaning and value attached to everything.

Systemic paradigm shifts are inherently transformational — that is, they change the fundamental nature of everything known and done previously. By comparison, everything else we do amounts to technical tinkering — a term I explain in Chapter 4.

For example, we all recognize the writing of the Magna Carta, the invention of the printing press and telescope, circumnavigation of the globe, the discovery of electricity, the invention of the automobile, and the development of radio, television, and satellite communications as a few of the truly transformational developments that have radically changed humanity's "vision of the possible" and way of living. In retrospect, we are comfortable with these particular transformations and recognize that they have changed the nature of human understanding and the course and character of human history. But for the people who directly experienced them, these transformations represented a huge threat to their investment in the prevailing paradigm. For, as Barker notes in his video, "When the paradigm shifts, everything goes back to zero."

"Going back to zero" means that those people or organizations with all the "points," successes, and advantages lose them and must redefine themselves and compete anew. This displacement of the familiar by the new engenders uncertainty, fear, mistrust, reaction, and, at times, strident appeals for sticking to the tried and true. Those with the most to lose try the hardest to make the old work, elaborating rhetorically on its inherent merits, and placing deliberate obstacles in the way of the new — often causing short-term setbacks in what appears to be an inevitable pathway to change.

This natural pattern of resistance and reaction to paradigm change is exactly what has happened recently in the United States when fundamental educational changes have been introduced. What seemed to be an impending systemic paradigm shift in thinking, policy, and practice toward educational change in the early '90s lies largely lost today under an avalanche of political reaction and reforms that tinker rather than transform. Whether that paradigm is rediscovered or remains a casualty of societal fear and reaction rests in your hands — today's educational leaders — and in the hands of the constituents you influence and serve.

The Paradigm We Share

The paradigm that is now lost evolved during the 30 years following WWII in direct response to the paradigm of schooling that middle-aged Americans all share. Almost all of today's U.S. education leaders attended school in the United States in or shortly after the 1940s. This was the Golden Era of what is now recognized as the Industrial Age, and our schools embodied many of the key elements that define that era: They were highly structured with time-regulated, assembly-line movement of students through programs, hierarchical relationships, and so on. Knowing what we did then, this all made sense, but it doesn't anymore because the Industrial Age is over.

I can state with confidence that, for almost all of today's education leaders, the schools we attended were building- .ith many enclosed rectangular rooms, each with four walls and one doorway. Usually one of those walls contained a bank of windows that gave us a glimpse of the world outside, and the difference between our elementary school and our high school was mainly one of size, not structure.

Elementary School

When we were very young, everything about school was very new, very big, and often very confusing. We thought the rooms to which we were assigned for 9 months belonged to a given teacher because it had her name on the door. The students who were assigned to that room with us were almost all our own age. Our group was called a "class," and both our room and our class were called "grades"—the specific levels into which our work was divided. Most of what we and "our" teacher did during the day happened in that particular room, and many of our books had a number on them that matched the grade we were in.

One very new thing was called "report cards." Our teachers gave them to us to take home every few months. These complicated-looking pieces of paper had all kinds of long words like "deportment" on them and little spaces for teachers to make marks or write in letters and numbers. At first we had no idea what this card and all its marks and spaces meant, but we soon observed that our teachers and parents took them very seriously.

After a while, we learned more about the marks our teacher was putting on the report card. Some of them were "good" and some of them were "bad"—just like we learned about the marks she had been putting on our papers in red pencil. We also learned that one of the best ways to stay out of trouble was to avoid getting bad marks put on anything, but especially on our report cards. To get good marks we had to promptly do what our teacher asked, not get into trouble with other kids, and not make mistakes on our papers. Because most of us educated adults liked school as kids, got along with our classmates, and learned fairly quickly, we usually got good marks on our report cards.

One thing we did every day in those early years at school was to have reading. Almost right away our teacher put us in three different groups—the Robins, Blue Birds, and Parakeets. Those of us in the Robin group read faster and better than many of our classmates. Nine years later we Robins ended up in the same classes in high school, which our teachers called "college prep." The kids in the Parakeet group had trouble reading so we rarely had them in our classes in high school. Their classes were called "remedial," and most of them didn't go to college like we did.

The most serious thing we did in school was to take special tests, which were printed nicely in big pamphlets. Our teachers told us not to worry about these tests, but they themselves seemed concerned. When we took them we all had to begin at the same time, remain absolutely silent, and finish when we were told, rather than when we were done.

Just as summer came along we got the most important mark of the year on our report cards. It told our parents whether we would be promoted or retained. At first we had no idea what these fancy words meant, but, as before, we soon learned that "retained" meant that you were "dumb" and couldn't learn what was going to be in next year's books. Only a few of the kids we knew were ever retained. The rest of us got to go on to a new room, a new teacher, and new books in September.

The older we got the more important "points" became. We learned that everything we did was worth 100 points: homework, quizzes, papers, tests, projects. It didn't take long for most of us to learn that

our goal was to get as many points as we could because points had clearly replaced those various marks on our earlier report cards as the indicator of how good and smart we were.

About this time we also observed that our books had gotten thicker and contained fewer pictures. This, we were told, showed that we were getting smarter and doing more grown-up work. That was nice to hear, but it didn't compensate for the fact that our favorite thing—recess—had disappeared from our daily schedule, though it did get replaced by something called "gym."

In addition, it appeared that the smarter we became the shorter our report cards got. After the first several grades, the card no longer had spaces on it for things like "gets along well with others." It just had spaces for words that matched the names of our books—things like arithmetic and social studies, our subjects. To make it worse for those of us who liked getting a good mark in the "gets along" space, the spaces next to each subject were pretty small. At first we weren't sure if that meant there wasn't much to learn in that subject, or there wasn't much to report, or both. But it only took a couple of report cards to reveal that those small spaces were just large enough for our "grade"—a letter or number our teacher devised after averaging all of the different things we had been doing during that "grading period." Yes, everything we did and everything that the teacher wanted our parents to know about us in school somehow got squeezed into those tiny spaces next to the names of the subjects.

Knowing what we did then, this all made sense, but it doesn't anymore because the Industrial Age is over.

Nonetheless, we were told all of this was getting us ready for high school—a place where everyone was grown up and the work was much harder than anything we could imagine.

High School

High school had several familiar things from the later years of elementary school, but it was a world unto itself. At first, everything about it seemed new, big, and confusing. Bells were always ringing, the hallways were mobbed, and you were just supposed to know:

> What all the bells meant; what a "schedule" was; what "electives" were; what "tracks" were; what your seven different teachers' names were; what the administrators' names were; what counselors were and what their names were; where the cafeteria was and how long you had to eat; where lockers were; what pep rallies were; the school song; what "varsity" meant; what "semesters" were; what terms like "freshman" and "sophomore" meant; what "GPA" meant — namely, life or death; what "the curve" was; what "Carnegie units" were; what "college-prep" meant; what class rank meant; what SATs and ACTs were; what "recommendations" were; that all grading was in permanent ink (so that all mistakes counted against you forever); and how to spell physics and Shakespeare.

And that was just for starters in this strange and unique institution.

But to dispel our confusion, we were continually told that all of this was getting us ready for college — a place where everyone was very grown up and the work was much harder than anything we could imagine.

Today's education leaders not only shared many of these educational experiences, we internalized and mastered their meaning and importance and negotiated our way through this maze successfully. For we "succeeded" in this paradigm — and ranked high enough among our peers to be accepted to college. Once there we again succeeded in a similar system with a similar way of doing business for at least another four years and received a degree. And beyond that, those of us who are educators found the experience of being in and around schools so congenial that we then devoted our career lives to it. For as my colleague Kit Marshall often observes: Educators have been in school since they were five.

And to that I can only add: It's so familiar we've made it our comfort zone.

The Systemic Character of the Paradigm We Share

Comfort zone or not, the more time I have spent with educators during the past 20 years, the more I have become aware of the highly personal and particularistic rather than organizational view they held

of their schools, their work, their problems, and their achievements. How things operate, what people do, or what problems they face are attributed either to the intentions, capabilities, and behaviors of particular individuals, or to the unique characteristics of particular situations. If only this person had done this rather than that, or because this person did such and such, or because this particular thing happened to be placed in that particular location, we now are faced with this (usually negative) situation; the unstated assumption being that everything would be running smoothly if it weren't for this certain behavior or circumstance.

As someone with a strong organizational perspective about schools, I always feel uncomfortable about addressing issues this way — especially after reading Tom Peters' and Robert Waterman's (1982) classic *In Search of Excellence;* becoming thoroughly enamored of Joel Barker's work on the nature and power of paradigms; studying the work of W. Edwards Deming; and having my paradigm perspectives blown by Robert Theobold's (1987) extremely perceptive book *The Rapids of Change.* These non-educational sources compelled me to look even more deeply than I had at two key things about education: (1) the future it and its students face, and (2) the fundamental character of how education was constituted and how it operates as a system.

The result of this deep analysis was literally a picture — that of an iceberg drifting in a (familiar, comfortable, unquestioned) sea of ingrained habits, past practices, and institutional inertia barely influenced by the winds of change and Information Age realities blowing on the top of its surface. The rest of the iceberg remains sheltered from and largely uninfluenced by these future conditions and realities. Its direction and momentum come almost entirely from the sea in which it drifts. That iceberg, represented in Figure 1.1 (on p.9) is the conceptual bedrock of the remainder of this book.

From a systemic perspective, the paradigm of schooling so familiar to all of us is the accumulation of the cultural and historical paradigms on which it was constructed. At its tip are the educators' attempts to respond to the constantly evolving and increasing challenges of today's Information Age. But their best individual efforts are being constantly resisted by the inertia of the past that is deeply

institutionalized within the remainder of the system. These key change-resisting systemic factors are the school system's:

- Bureaucratic Age culture, which defines and operates everything in the system on the basis of time spent, resources, programs, means, procedures, and roles rather than on outcomes, results, standards, achievement, ends, and goals accomplished;
- Industrial Age delivery system in which curriculum, programs, teaching, assessment, and student placement are defined and organized around the major features of the factory assembly-line, with everyone doing preassigned work at a pre-scheduled workstation for the proper amount of time;
- Nine-month Agrarian Age calendar, which forces the Industrial Age delivery system to schedule and limit teaching and learning opportunities around the traditional Labor Day to Memorial Day

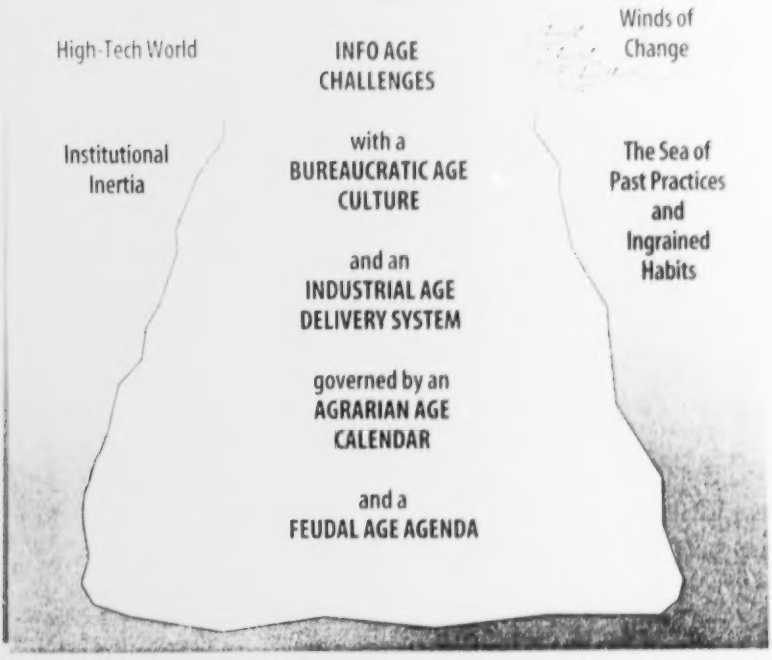
High-Tech World
INFO AGE CHALLENGES
Winds of Change
Institutional Inertia
with a BUREAUCRATIC AGE CULTURE
The Sea of Past Practices and Ingrained Habits
and an INDUSTRIAL AGE DELIVERY SYSTEM
governed by an AGRARIAN AGE CALENDAR
and a FEUDAL AGE AGENDA

Figure 1.1 *Our Systemic Educational Iceberg*

calendar so that even today's students have the summer off to harvest crops (and forget lots of last year's work); and

- Its insidious Feudal Age agenda of sorting and selecting the most able and deserving students from the others so that high-level educational opportunities are not "wasted" on others.

Together, this set of systemic factors has defined and shaped the schools we all attended, and their inertia is deeply institutionalized throughout our society in state laws, regulations, policies, school accreditation and student graduation requirements, established precedents, organizational structures, universally accepted practices, and the paradigm perspectives of five generations of Americans who believe that this *is* what school is, period.

A challenge was mounted during the past two decades to the substance, effectiveness, legitimacy, and necessity of this enormously educentric paradigm — a paradigm defined by what the system is and (always) has been rather than by what it should and could be if student learning and future success in the Information Age were its true purpose and priority. That serious, research-based attempt to fundamentally shift this Educentric Iceberg paradigm to one of future-focused learner empowerment was beaten back in 1993 and 1994. What that now-lost paradigm is, how it was lost, what that loss has cost us, and how it can be regained is the focus of this book. So please read on — with an open paradigm perspective about an institution that is totally familiar to us all: American education.

CHAPTER 2

THE PARADIGM WE LOST

The Emergence of Paradigm Dissonance

The challenge to our familiar paradigm of schooling surfaced in the '60s, but most of us didn't notice. The research and theory from that decade called into question the most fundamental premises and features of our prevailing education system and offered possibilities about its purposes, processes, structures, and culture that had the potential for literally turning existing patterns of thinking and practice (the Educentric Iceberg) upside down.

At that time, some 30 years ago, educational researchers such as James Coleman, John Carroll, Benjamin Bloom, and my long-time friend James Block provided penetrating insights into the counterproductive ways schools and classrooms were defined, organized, and operated. They pointed out that at the time:

- The prevailing paradigm of educational thinking and practice ignores fundamental factors about learners and learning and actually causes low levels of motivation and achievement among embarrassingly large numbers of students.
- Much higher levels of motivation, learning, and success are possible for virtually all students.
- If the paradigm didn't shift, a whole generation of Americans would unnecessarily gain far less from their education than they otherwise could.

Well, that generation has come and gone. We now face a period of even greater paradigm dissonance than those researchers' ideas initially generated. The Bureaucratic, Industrial, Agrarian, and Feudal Ages are over. Yet we remain immersed in their paradigms of learning and schooling. For, despite the brilliance, simplicity, and appeal of these researchers' insights, the efforts of numerous reformers and educators across the country to use and build on them, and the obvious

need for improving student achievement in today's Information Age, our schools continue to experience an assault against most of the ideas and practices these basic insights spawned.

In many areas of the United States, this assault fostered a climate of intimidation. State and local superintendents were fired, curriculum leaders were harassed, board members were challenged and displaced, and principals and teachers were openly told that certain ideas, terms, and practices were simply not acceptable to some of their constituents — don't use them!

Why did this occur? Because the ideas in question — the core of our Lost Paradigm — run against the grain of deeply entrenched aspects of our educational system, our culture, and the beliefs of influential segments of our society, including us. We're all a bit afraid to melt the Iceberg, even though many of us recognize that it's outdated and no longer effective.

How Our Lost Paradigm Took Form

A coherent alternative to our Educentric Iceberg paradigm came together in fits and starts between the 1960s and the 1990s. Key conceptual breakthroughs, research data, and innovations in practice all eventually formed a compelling picture of what learning communities (as distinct from schools) could be and become. These new learning communities are grounded in the challenges of Information Age careers, living, and responsibilities.

My Initial Paradigm Shocks

The Educentric Iceberg paradigm was all I knew or thought possible when I finished my Ph.D. in 1967; like almost everyone else, I accepted its basic features and underlying systemic characteristics as givens.

But then the first of many "paradigm shocks," or redefining insights, occurred for me. As a new faculty member at Harvard's Graduate School of Education with three degrees from the University of Chicago under my belt, I had already published two articles in major research journals and thought I had my future research career well defined.

What a surprise I got during my first month there! Along with hundreds of others, I attended a major conference organized by the dean, Theodore Sizer, on the pros and cons of the biggest blockbuster to have hit American education up to that point: *the Equality of Educational Opportunity* study (EEO 1966), also known widely as "The Coleman Report."

The report's primary finding was that student characteristics and family and neighborhood socioeconomic status factors (SES), not school variables, accounted for almost all measured differences in student achievement in America's schools. The blazing headlines surrounding the study were: "Schools Don't Make a Difference." And those words got people's attention! Whether the claim was correct or not, this often-quoted headline left me and millions of others stunned.

Of course schools make a difference, I thought. Look at me. I'm the son of a garbage collector and hog rancher in Oregon. How do you think I got here, on a spaceship? Sure, I had some mediocre teachers in high school, but what about all the great ones? Don't they count? What does this all mean?

What the data meant, I soon learned, contradicted all of the conventional wisdom about the factors that affected student learning. Namely, in statistical terms, when you considered the nation as a whole and all factors simultaneously, virtually none of the factors that educators had been using for decades as the basis of evaluating and accrediting school quality was actually correlated with student learning once student characteristics and family SES factors were taken into account.

Teachers' degrees and salaries, school and class sizes, the number of books in the library, the number of microscopes in the lab, and a host of other variables weren't the things helping students learn. Schools were, and still are to a large degree, modeling and evaluating themselves on factors with no direct bearing on the overall achievement of their students. The keys to school effectiveness lay elsewhere.

Coleman himself spoke to our group. What he told us was the most shocking and incomprehensible thing I had ever encountered in education:

Educational opportunity can no longer be defined as student access to variables that don't directly affect their learning and achievement. Opportunity must be measured in terms of the achievements of students, not how much time they spend in particular programs or courses. We will have equality of opportunity when we have equality of learning outcomes across schools.

What? Schooling and opportunity based on outcomes and not on access? Was Coleman suggesting that his data called for a totally shifted paradigm of education?

Yes. Coleman's study results clearly showed that schools could no longer be measured in terms of time, means, and resources — the Bureaucratic Culture elements of the Iceberg paradigm. Schools had to be measured in terms of their outcomes, ends, and results. Like almost everyone around me, I found his fundamental point too alien to grasp. Paradigm dissonance had struck.

But a year later I did get it, thanks to my high school buddy and fellow educator James Block. Block had started at the University of Chicago as an undergraduate in 1963, where I was pursuing my graduate studies in education and sociology. In early 1967 I introduced Block to Benjamin Bloom, chair of Chicago's graduate program in Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistical Analysis. Block became Bloom's top graduate assistant just at the time that Bloom was developing and testing the concept he called "Learning for Mastery." Thanks to Block's exceptional energy, ability, and commitment, within a few years the concept was known worldwide as a simple but powerful instructional/reform model called Mastery Learning (see Block, 1971, 1974, and 1988).

A conversation I had with Block in 1968 flooded my mind with new insights. Block explained how a paper published by John Carroll in 1963 had captured Bloom's attention because it gave a profound but ever-so-simple slant to the notions of student aptitude and capacity for successful learning. Carroll's paper was called "A Model of School Learning," but, in retrospect, he could have called it "The Emperor's New School" because it exposed some obvious things about schools that people just hadn't seen or acknowledged. Three of its key notions became my next Paradigm Shocks:

One paradigm shock was Carroll's argument that aptitude is the rate at which learners acquire new skill or knowledge, not their ability to do so. Schools operate as if aptitude and ability are the same thing. Hence, they inappropriately limit access to higher level curriculum based on a false notion of differences in student "aptitude."

Another paradigm shock was a corollary to the first: Therefore, potentially all learners can learn to do clearly defined things equally well, but the time required to learn to do them will vary because learner's aptitudes vary. So how long it takes to learn something well should not be confused with acquiring the ability to eventually do it well.

Yet another paradigm shock was that school learning is organized around fixed, predetermined, one-shot amounts of time — the Industrial Age delivery system of the Iceberg paradigm — that do not match the learning rates of many students. This structure typically allows enough time for faster learners, but less time than slower learners need. Therefore, slower learners might be "failing" because they aren't given enough time, not because they lack the ability or motivation to learn what is expected.

Wow! Now those were things I could relate to because I knew from years of playing the trumpet that how long it took to learn a piece was unrelated to how well one could eventually learn to perform it. That's why I practiced diligently and why an orchestra practices as well. And as I thought about many other examples from my schooling and life, Carroll's three paradigm-breaking insights seemed profound. The simple issue he found about the current model of schooling was: Time is the constant, and learning is the variable.

But what, wondered Block and I, if we made learning the constant, and time the variable (just like in real life)?

By the time Block and I had this conversation, Bloom (1968) had already come up with the answer, namely: You'd have far more students reaching "mastery" levels on what they learned than you do today.

Bloom had translated Carroll's insights into a fundamental paradigm shift in instructional practice that he felt could apply to the typical classroom. The essence of his argument was, instead of giving students a typical one-shot block of time and chance to learn something

and ending up with highly variable learning results (which immediately get graded and permanently recorded), why not:

- Clearly define at the outset the (high success) learning result you want;
- Make all students eligible for attaining that result; and
- Offer students at least a second chance (i.e., a little more time with additional assistance or "correctives") to achieve it?

In other words, Bloom's initial notion of effective instruction required educators to reverse the characteristics of conventional practice. Here, with the benefit of hindsight and some vocabulary changes, is the essence of his proposed paradigm shift:

From Iceberg Paradigm	To Mastery Paradigm
Fixed Time	Flexible Time
Single Opportunity	Multiple Opportunities
Curriculum Focus	Learning Focus
Vague Standards	Criterion Standards
Variable Expectations	Mastery Expectations
Bell-Curve Results	Skewed-Curve Results

With these key factors in mind, Block and others had begun to test the relative effectiveness of Bloom's strategy, using carefully planned units of instruction with clearly defined learning goals in regular/typical classroom settings. Using the Mastery Learning strategy, teachers had been able to increase the percentage of students reaching previously defined A-level performance standards on given units of curriculum by three and four times. In addition, students were retaining what they learned better than before and were doing better in subsequent work in that subject, even though their teachers had gone back to "conventional" teaching.

In other words, when learning expectations were made clear and students were given time and support to succeed, the students seemed to be developing strategies about how to learn that they were then transferring to other work. Thus, it seemed that a strategy like Mastery Learning could dramatically increase the percentage of U.S.

students doing excellent work, and help students retain and use their learning at higher levels. Block's conclusion was that persistent, low levels of achievement were reversible with a different paradigm of expectations and classroom instruction.

Block was so excited by the results that he declared Mastery Learning to be the wave of the future in American education. But as a sociologist, I saw that huge organizational obstacles stood in the way. With high schools clearly in mind, I pointed out that Mastery Learning would never "take" for several reasons.

- The fixed-time, one-chance nature and structure of our Carnegie Unit/semester-based credentialing system with its wide distribution of learning results and assigned grades (the Feudal Age agenda of the Iceberg Paradigm) is opposite the clearly defined performance standards and flexible time required by Mastery Learning and the needs of the individual learner. When faced with this contradiction, teachers will experience dissonance, be compelled to operate according to this deeply institutionalized structure, and compromise the essence of the Mastery Learning model.

- Moreover, Mastery Learning assumes that teachers want all students to be successful learners and will, therefore, establish clear performance goals, criteria, and expectations accordingly. But this is counteracted by the built-in selection agenda of schools — the devices of tracking, contest learning, comparative standards, bell-curve grading, and class ranking that are used by schools and teachers to actually magnify differences in student learning and performance. This sort-and-select agenda directly undermines the all-can-learn-well premise of Carroll and Bloom.

I left my conversation with Block with an entirely different perspective of schooling and the factors that encouraged and inhibited student learning and motivation.

As I thought about these factors over the next several years, what Coleman had said made more and more sense. And after many more conversations with Block and with Henry Levin of Stanford University; John Champlin, then superintendent of the Johnson City

Central Schools in New York; and Wilbur Brookover, the unacknowledged pioneer of Effective Schools research at Michigan State University; I finally drew three major conclusions about our familiar Iceberg paradigm of education and the challenge of creating the conditions of authentic learning success for all students. They were:

- Seeking to achieve authentic learning success for all students is a matter of deep personal and organizational purpose and intention that flies in the face of conventional thinking and practice (the Iceberg paradigm), and shapes how we view everything about our system of education. It requires an unwavering focus on learning, outcomes, performance, results, and the future — not on courses, curriculum, programs, and semesters (the Bureaucratic Age component of the Iceberg).

- Education, despite its rhetoric to the contrary, is a completely time-based institution. Virtually all of its major features are formally/legally defined by and structured around predetermined blocks of clock and calendar time (the Industrial Age components of the Iceberg). These uniform blocks of time define and seriously limit the conditions of opportunity, access, and eligibility that most affect students' chances of learning success.

- A criterion-defined system is the only achievement system that maximizes clarity about student learning and performance and gives individual students full credit for what they ultimately accomplish. In this system, the actual substance of what is learned and demonstrated is directly stated in expected outcomes, assessment measures, reporting devices, and credentialing systems. Grades, scores, percentages, and other labels only obscure and distort the actual substance of what students accomplish.

Developing a Common Reform Agenda of Learning Success

These three conclusions as well as the preceding paradigm shocks they are based upon became the pillars of my first 15 years' effort to explain and implement what I call a learning success paradigm of education. Without ever giving it a name, and without ever formally

joining forces. Bloom, Block, Ernest Boyer, Brookover, Champlin, Coleman, John Goodlad, Madeline Hunter, Henry Levin, Larry Lezotte, Bernice McCarthy, Theodore Sizer, myself, and a host of other school reformers of the '70s and '80s would, I believe, agree to being unified under this learning success banner.

At its core, the learning success paradigm is learner centered, success-oriented, outcome-based, inclusive, expansive, brain-compatible, systemic, and holistic. And, as it has developed over the past 30 years, it has evolved into being about:

- The processes and conditions that promote successful learning,
- High expectations for learners,
- The dignity of the individual,
- Cultivating human potential,
- How people learn,
- The forms that successful learning take, and
- Accurate and substantive assessment and reporting.

Without question, this paradigm rests on a huge base of research findings and implications; an unassailable foundation of theory, logic, and common sense; and a wealth of practical examples in all areas of human endeavor. But one of its strongest features is the common philosophy of purposes and beliefs that its contributors and advocates share. Here are examples of some key beliefs and purpose statements underlying these diverse reform efforts:

- All students can learn and succeed, but not on the same day in the same way.
- Successful learning fosters more successful learning, just as failure promotes more failure.
- Schools control some of the conditions that directly influence student learning, opportunities, and success.
- What and whether students learn successfully is more important than exactly when or how they learn.

- Challenge, not fear, promotes successful learning and performance.
- The purpose of schools is to equip all students with the knowledge, skills, and qualities needed for future success.
- The distribution of learning results for minority students in a school should be no different than for majority students.
- Students learn more successfully when they have a clear picture of what is expected of them and enough time to accomplish it.
- It is better to focus on in-depth learning of real significance than to superficially learn about things of little consequence.

Despite the thrust of this optimistic and empowering philosophy and the enormous energy devoted to implementing it, this collective cadre of reformers have barely made a dent in what appears to be the most deeply entrenched and anti-empowerment feature of schools: their selection agenda. Despite all the effort, schools have been unable to move from what Bloom and Block both call "identifying and selecting talent" to "fostering and developing" it — the essence of the learning success approach.

Challenging the Selection Agenda of Schools

At the heart of the selection agenda of schooling lies the bell curve — its meaning, role, purpose, and application in both the instructional and credentialing systems of schools. Decades of grading practice and "malpractice" in America's high schools and universities have convinced generations of students and adults that "the curve" is not only natural, "normal," and to be expected in instructional situations, it is actually the standard on which grading and program design should be based. This view has provided the key rationale for generations of curriculum tracking and for the A through F distributions of grades.

However, thanks to Bloom's incisive analysis (1976), virtually this entire cadre of reformers has been able to argue that the bell curve is artificially contrived, counterproductive, and unjustified in the face

of far more positive alternatives. The curve, Bloom argued, was called "normal" because it portrayed the "naturally occurring" pattern of data that resulted when conditions and influencing factors operated randomly — that is, by chance. Chance is the key condition on which the fundamentals of probability theory and statistics are based and on which the likelihood of obtaining a normal curve depends. But, Bloom showed:

> *Instruction is not a naturally occurring/random phenomenon! It is a deliberate intervention in what otherwise might resemble the chance learning processes of students. Therefore, instruction that is intentional, well planned, and effective should produce a sharply skewed curve with most of the students doing very well — **not** a "normal" one.*

That's what "making a difference" and "being effective" mean — intervening effectively in what might otherwise be the random distribution of results if students attempted to learn on their own. Therefore, the last thing teachers who want their students to learn successfully should expect or accept is a bell curve of results.

This mind-blowing, paradigm-shattering insight served as the technical and motivational bedrock for all of the major learning success reform efforts that followed: Mastery Learning, Mastery Teaching, Effective Schools, Outcome-Based Education, Essential Schools, Accelerated Schools, Success for All Schools, and countless other variations on these approaches. Their common mantra: Overcoming the deadly bell curve of expectations and results requires focused, deliberate, and insightful effort and intervention.

These reformers also realized that the curve and the selection agenda gave teachers and administrators an open door of non-accountability concerning student achievement. The prevailing argument was: "Students with backgrounds or abilities like these will 'naturally' perform accordingly." But the reformers realized that as long as the public regarded the curve as legitimate and inevitable, educators could argue without impunity that if students didn't have the ability or motivation to take advantage of the opportunities they were providing, there was nothing they could do to change things. In other words,

Educators saw their job as ***providing opportunities*** *for students to learn — the rest (and the result) was up to the students.*

This passive view of educators' roles and responsibilities could not be justified in view of Bloom's reasoning and research.

The Key Elements in the Learning Success Paradigm

Over 15 years elapsed between the time of Coleman's pioneering research on the Equality of Educational Opportunity and the emergence of school reform as a growing industry in the early '80s. During this time the paradigm shocks had begun to create a consistent

From Iceberg Paradigm	To Learning Success Paradigm
Aptitude as Ability	Aptitude as Learning Rate
Talent Selection Mission	Talent Development Mission
Bell-Curve Expectations	High-Success Expectations
Calendar Defined	Outcome Defined
Learner Accountability	Shared Accountability
Teaching as Coverage	Teaching as Intervention
Provides Opportunity	Learns Successfully
Content-Compatible Methods	Brain-Compatible Methods
Single Modality Instruction	Multiple Modality Instruction
Structured Pacing	Continuous Challenge
Fixed-Time Opportunity	Expanded Opportunity
Works Alone	Collaborates
Interpersonal Competition	High-Challenge Standards
Comparative Evaluation	Criterion Evaluation
Variable Grades	Criterion Standards
Grading in Ink	Assessing in Pencil
Cumulative Achievement	Culminating Achievement
Permanent Records	Alterable Transcripts
Time-Based Credit	Performance-Based Credit
Calendar Closure	Outcome Closure

Figure 2.1 *The Key Elements in the Learning Success Paradigm*

picture of the major changes in thinking and practice schools were going to have to make if learning success was going to become a way of doing business. Reformers were calling for a shift from the then-unnamed Iceberg paradigm to the learning success paradigm. The key elements on which the various reforms focused are described in Figure 2.1 on page 22.

Clearly, the many shifts listed in Figure 2.1 reflect the issues identified earlier by Coleman, Carroll, Bloom, and myself as critical to changing the conditions in which educators and students find themselves. A major paradigm shift from Iceberg to learning success was needed if America's schools were to begin realizing the learning potential inherent in the students they served. Moreover, by the early '80s there were isolated examples of these shifts making a large difference in the achievement levels of students on conventional basic skills measures.

That is why I and others reacted with such mixed emotions to the flood of studies and reports issued in 1983 and 1984 by organizations, task forces, and reformers, including the universally read *A Nation At Risk* report of the U.S. Department of Education (1983). On the one hand, this huge volume of reports drew enormous attention to the need for serious educational change. But, on the other, most of what was recommended was framed in the context of the Educentric Iceberg paradigm — things that represented a completely conventional perspective of schooling, such as longer days, longer years, more required courses, thicker books, and harder tests.

The good news, however, was that contained here and there within these books and reports were some genuinely innovative ideas and recommendations that reflected many of these Learning Success paradigm elements (see Spady and Marx 1984). Unfortunately, around that time, I began to believe that all of this reform work, including my own, was still missing the boat. Two years later I knew I was right.

Beyond the Learning Success Paradigm

After enormous soul searching and prolonged dialogues with colleagues, I finally realized around 1986 that we reformers had been

deeply committed to improving student learning outcomes and success, but none of us had clearly defined what either an outcome was or success meant. We had simply accepted anything that anyone was teaching or using as an indicator of student learning as "achievement," "outcomes," or "success." Neither we nor implementers of our ideas in the field had an agreed-upon standard on which to ground, target, and judge our efforts.

Major turmoil, frustrations, and disagreements arose when I broached this issue with other reformers and practitioners, and they continue to this day in debates about state and national standards. I believed that we reformers were asking our constituents to "focus on outcomes" without having defined what outcomes were, either conceptually or substantively. Consequently, everything that moved was being called an outcome: scores on standardized reading and mathematics tests, teacher-assigned grades, scores on district subject matter exams, percentages of students taking and passing honors or other college-prep courses, Advanced Placement test results, SAT and ACT scores, dropout rates, college attendance rates, and so on.

On the one hand, visible improvements over time in these easily understood indicators of learning success convinced a lot of educators, parents, and policymakers that our particular reforms were working, and they became motivated to try what we were suggesting. On the other hand, however, no one could tell them what an outcome really was, or which outcomes were, in theory or practice, more important than others for students to learn and demonstrate.

But after an enormous amount of analysis, discussion, debate, and testing of ideas and their implications, an answer finally emerged. And, like most of the paradigm shocks and insights noted earlier, it had the potential to turn everything on its head — only more so. What I realized was:

> *An outcome is a result — something students can demonstrate* ***after*** *an instructional event is over. It's* ***not*** *an accumulation or average of all the things that happen during the event — it's the actual culminating demonstration of what was learned in those previous experiences and activities. Therefore, its significance is reflected in what matters and happens to the student after the event, not during it.*

This initial insight quickly opened the door to several others, all of which had major implications regarding the paradigm shifts just described, namely:

Actual demonstrations. An outcome is an actual demonstration of something — what students can actually do with what they know — not the score, label, grade, or percentage that someone attaches to the demonstration, but the substance and actions of the demonstration itself.

Observable competence. A demonstration of competence must be defined by observable demonstration verbs like "describe" and "explain" — not by commonly used non-demonstration verbs like "know" and "understand." If you change the demonstration verb you change the outcome/demonstration, even if the content remains the same.

Significant outcomes. Significant outcomes are demonstrations of competence that matter to the learner and other major stakeholders after the learning event is over. These outcomes last beyond the duration of the event, and matter in the future — after graduation.

Context matters. All demonstration of learning and competence occur somewhere — in a defined setting or physical context (e.g., before an audience, out of doors, before the City Council). These context factors directly affect the content, form, complexity, and competencies that the demonstration requires.

Complexity varies. Demonstrations of competence can range in complexity and form from the simple, structured "discrete content skills" of most school curriculum, assignments, and tests to the highly complex, open-ended life-role performances required of adults in the real world (see Figure 2.2 on page 26).

To describe the magnitude of the shock waves that these definitions and insights generated among U.S. practitioners and policymakers who took them seriously would be difficult. It required them to be clear about both the substance and complexities of the learning they were trying to foster and to transcend their ambiguous world of points, scores, and grades (see Spady 1994, Chapters 2 and 3).

In simple terms, the key messages to those concerned with the Learning Success paradigm were:

- Outcomes must drive curriculum, not the other way around.
- Outcomes are performances, not scores or grades, and they embody student competence, not just content.
- Educators need real words to define the substance of the performance they are seeking, including powerful and specific demonstration verbs.
- Students need to execute those verbs, and teachers are obligated to teach them how — often over a period of years.
- Outcomes happen at or after the end of major instructional experiences, and they matter after the experience is over.
- Outcomes are complex and significant performance abilities, not day-to-day tasks, assignments, and tests.

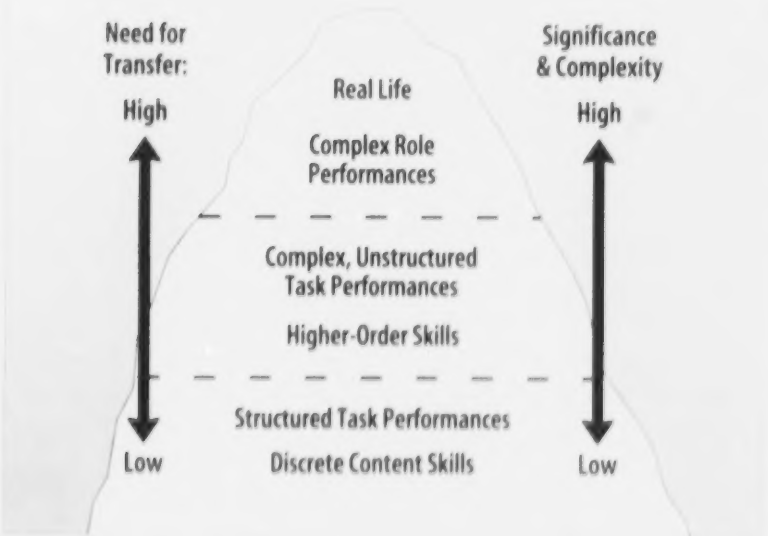

Figure 2.2 *The Demonstration Mountain of Learning Outcomes*

On and on the concrete implications went, challenging the wisdom and utility of countless educentric practices that no longer made sense. These outdated practices included:

- Writing outcomes for the existing curriculum, rather than designing the curriculum needed to achieve significant outcomes.
- Focusing exclusively on content instruction (the nouns) and ignoring systematic competence development (the verbs)—something that takes the coordinated effort of many teachers across subject areas to accomplish over a period of many years.
- Focusing primarily on micro everything—small chunks of curriculum, small chunks of time, small chunks of learning, small tests for these small chunks, grading the small chunks, averaging the small grades on the small chunks, self-contained/isolated classrooms, and so on.
- Substituting symbols for substance—pretending that scores, percentages, grades, averages, and units of credit were actually the students' learning and their outcome demonstrations.
- Assuming that the traditional subjects taught in school directly relate to and support the complex competences needed by adults in careers and life roles as they encounter the challenges and rigors of the Information Age.
- Assuming that outcomes emanate from within the traditional curriculum areas when, in fact, outcomes (i.e., complex performance abilities) of significance cut across and extend beyond discrete subject areas.
- Testing on a fixed schedule and immediately grading in ink, even though students learn at different rates and it takes years, not days or weeks, to develop complex competences and performance abilities.

We reformers had been using the language of outcomes but hadn't realized what it meant and what its larger implications were. Once we did, we realized that we had been focusing on a very limited definition of learning success—success in doing the traditional things

done in conventional school classrooms but not the things that represented a more complex notion of role-performance competence and its application in the challenging arenas of adult life.

To our credit we had been focusing on improving in-school learning success and on how schools and classrooms could change to achieve it; but to our dismay we had failed to realize that over a period of generations schools had taken on an educentric existence of their own. They had developed a unique way of doing business governed by symbols, rituals, and habits of mind that have become self-reinforcing and self-justifying — except when scrutinized against the lens of concrete substance and real life in the Information Age. Then the Educentric Iceberg paradigm cries out for total transformation.

Once we acknowledged our educentric blinders, we saw that:

> *The processes and experiences of schooling should matter after all of a student's instructional experiences are over — meaning after graduation, once students are out in the real world. That is the ultimate test of learning success!*

But for this new definition of learning success to become a reality, districts would need to start their outcome development by examining the future their students will be encountering in the real world as young adults — and designing back from there.

The good news is that by the early '90s, thousands of educators and policymakers had been introduced to the future-focused, life-performance approach to outcome defining and systemic change. Districts that had taken the lead with what we came to call "Strategic Design" — Aurora, Colorado; Mooresville, North Carolina; and Yarmouth, Maine, being clear examples — became the focal point of considerable national interest because educators could immediately see that their strategic curriculum planning had transcended the serious constraints of the Educentric Iceberg paradigm. Their outcomes were addressing the whole person and equipping their students with the complex competencies and role-performance abilities needed for a successful future — yet they were still able to accomplish the basic skills and content standards of the traditional curriculum.

In retrospect, it is clear that what these districts were considering was a double paradigm shift — one focused primarily on means and the other on ends, respectively. The first embodied the shift from the Iceberg paradigm of school functioning to a learning success way of doing business so that far more students could be successful learners. The other arose out of the definition and implications of the learning outcomes they would be pursuing: from an educentric approach to school learning and achievement to an approach that involved future-focused complex competencies and life performances. This latter shift to a Life Performance paradigm dramatically alters the traditional ends of schooling and requires a deep, systemic change in virtually every element of the educational system. The key elements of this second systemic paradigm shift are summarized in Figure 2.3.

From **Educentric Paradigm**	To **Life Performance Paradigm**
Iceberg Components	Information Age Challenges
Subject-Focused Planning	Future-Focused Planning
Learning as Mental Processing	Learning as Application of Mental Processing
Micro-Content Learner	Total Role Performer
Discipline-Structured Curriculum	Problem-Structured Curriculum
Content Acquisition	Competence Development
Seat/Classroom Learning	Authentic Context Learning
Paper-Pencil Testing	Authentic Assessment
Points as Achievement	Performance as Achievement
Paper Transcripts	Performance Portfolios
Stable and Familiar	Dynamic and Effective

Figure 2.3 *The Key Elements in the Life Performance Paradigm*

A Life Performance Focus + A Learning Success Focus = Future Empowerment for Students

Together, the key elements of the Life Performance paradigm and those of the learning success paradigm form a new mega-paradigm aimed at equipping all learners with the complex abilities needed for

success in the many performance roles adults face in their career, family, and civic lives. I call this integrated mega shift the Future Empowerment paradigm.

Its life-performance elements establish the nature and direction of the abilities and learning experiences needed by students for future empowerment. Its learning success elements establish the instructional and opportunity conditions that enable students to be successful in developing those essential abilities. Both sets of shifts are needed for genuine future empowerment to occur.

The good news is that strong momentum toward this integrated Future Empowerment paradigm was building rapidly in the early '90s. But the bad news is that the transformation in thinking, planning, and implementation represented by this new paradigm got nipped in the bud when the intense political opposition to anything associated with the word "outcomes" surfaced nationwide in early 1993.

Without question, if our system of public education is to survive, we educational leaders must recapture the momentum for implementing this Future Empowerment paradigm. American education simply can't continue as an Educentric Iceberg floating in a sea of past practices and ingrained habits.

My Initial Paradigm Shocks

Shock No. 1: Once student characteristics and family socioeconomic status factors were taken into account, virtually none of the factors that educators had been using for decades as the basis of evaluating and accrediting school quality was actually correlated with student learning.

Shock No. 2: We will have equality of opportunity when we have equality of learning outcomes across schools. Opportunity must be measured in terms of the achievements of students, not how much time they spend in particular programs or courses.

Shock No. 3: Aptitude is the rate at which learners acquire new skills or knowledge, NOT their ability to do so. Schools operate as if aptitude and ability are the same thing by limiting access to higher level curriculum based on differences in "aptitude."

Shock No. 4: Potentially, all students can learn to do clearly defined things equally well, but the time required to learn to do so will vary because students' aptitudes vary.

Shock No. 5: School learning is organized around fixed, predetermined, one-shot amounts of time that do not match the learning rates of many students.

Shock No.6: The credentialing system of schools drives the instructional system. The fixed-time, one-chance nature and structure of our Carnegie unit/semester-based credentialing system with its wide distribution of learning results and assigned grades is totally opposite the needs of the individual learner.

Shock No. 7: The built-in selection agenda of schools — the devices of tracking, contest learning, comparative standards, bell-curve grading, and class ranking used by schools and teachers actually create, illuminate, and magnify differences in student learning and performance.

Shock No. 8: Instruction is not a naturally occurring/random phenomenon; it is a deliberate intervention in what otherwise might resemble the "chance" learning processes of students. Therefore, instruction that is intentional, well planned, and effective should produce a sharply skewed curve — NOT a "normal" one — with most of the students doing very well.

Shock No. 9: Educators often view their job as "PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES" for students to learn — the rest (and the result) was up to the students. Therefore, they could argue without impunity that if the students didn t have the ability or motivation to take advantage of the opportunities they were providing, there was nothing they could do to change things.

Transformational Paradigm Shocks

Shock No. 10: Reformers had been deeply committed to improving student learning outcomes and success, but no one had defined what either an outcome was or success meant. Anything that anyone was teaching or using as an indicator of learning was indiscriminately being called achievement, outcomes, or success.

Shock No. 11: An outcome is a result — something that happens after an instructional event is over. It s not an accumulation or average of all the things that happen during the event — it's the actual "culminating" demonstration of what was learned in all of those previous experiences and activities.

CHAPTER 5

WHAT WENT WRONG

The attacks against the Future Empowerment paradigm, which gathered enormous momentum and spread across the nation in 1993, disrupted initiatives focused on improving what educators and policymakers regarded as important aspects of schooling.

Like school improvement efforts in previous eras, most of these improvement efforts fell into the categories of technical tinkering and segmental change (see Spady 1996c). Technical tinkering is a tentative, small-scale, often piecemeal exploration of the possibility and feasibility of making organizational change and improvement. It is usually undertaken by inquisitive individuals or small groups of innovators who hope to develop a workable prototype and grow it throughout their organization. Because they are isolated endeavors, technical tinkering efforts usually come and go with little fanfare or consequence.

Segmental change was common in 1993 among states and districts committed to making specific program changes in their schools. Segmental change usually focuses on improving a major component of the curriculum or instructional program and requires the coordinated involvement of all personnel directly involved in implementing that component, but the individual components usually remain disconnected. Segmental change also has an infamous history as the "Reform of the Year."

A much smaller cadre of states and districts were engaged in the serious and far-reaching discussions that engender the third level of educational reform — systemic change. Systemic change is comprehensive and involves redefining, redirecting, realigning, and restructuring the total organization so that it can achieve what its stakeholders agree is its fundamental purpose for existing. Examples of systemic change are rare in education at any level. But in 1993 several thousand educators and policymakers in the United States did understand most of the paradigm shocks and why implementing

the Learning Success paradigm was imperative. And a few dozen districts were using most of its elements to design changes that were comprehensive enough to be considered systemic.

Implementing the Future Empowerment paradigm requires an even more fundamental change in educational thinking and action, and this involves achieving the fourth and highest level of educational change — paradigm transformation. Future empowerment is grounded in the elements of the Life Performance paradigm and uses the elements of the Learning Success paradigm to achieve a totally noneducentric transformation in the way schools are defined. Paradoxically, many of the Future Empowerment paradigm's "new" elements have been alive and well in the educational and training programs of many career fields and institutions for centuries — the military, music, business, sports, and medicine being among the most obvious — but they have not found their way into the academic programs of schools and universities to any significant degree.

Because they had experienced many of its key elements in the course of their careers, several million Americans in 1993 intuitively understood what the Future Empowerment paradigm represented. But only a few thousand of them were at all involved in public school reform in any capacity, and most of those were unknown to each other. Nonetheless, a core group of several hundred people were deeply committed to implementing virtually all of the Future Empowerment paradigm's elements. This core included major policy-making bodies in at least four states, which were poised to change constraining laws or regulations to allow this new future-focused paradigm to emerge. Today there is no such core.

Where the Future Empowerment Paradigm Stood in 1993

The Status of National Reform Efforts in 1993

Although many programs to improve public education existed in 1993, nine entities with national agendas and outreach stood out at the forefront ready to undertake school — as opposed to strictly instructional — reform efforts. They and their key leaders were:

Reform Organization	Key Leader
Accelerated Schools	Henry Levin
Center for Leadership on School Reform	Phillip Schlechty
Comer School Development Program	James Comer
Coalition of Essential Schools	Theodore Sizer
Effective Schools	Lawrence Lezotte
High Success Outcome Based Education	William Spady
Mastery Learning	James Block
National Center for Outcome Based Education	John Champlin
Success for All Schools	Robert Slavin

Of these nine entities, three were clearly committed to total organizational change at the school district level: Schlechty's Center for Leadership, Champlin's National Center, and my High Success Network. The remainder were focused more on individual school change, although Lezotte's Effective Schools work often had total school district endorsement and participation. What gave all nine a common agenda and purpose were two overarching concerns:

- Establishing and achieving outcomes of significance for all students; and
- Transforming and expanding the conditions of success in schools that directly affect student learning and success.

How each initiative addressed these two key concerns varied considerably, but their common connections are apparent and important. (Please realize that the following brief description of where each stood in 1993 on these two issues does not reflect the many details and subtleties in their work. Nor is this analysis an attempt to set up better-worse comparisons. It is simply a thumbnail description of where these reforms stood when the overt opposition to these and other reforms began.)

Significant learner outcomes. Without question, all nine reform entities were outspoken in their commitment to helping schools focus on improving student learning and achievement. Where they differed

was on what they defined as significant student outcomes. To understand their differences, let's divide learning outcomes into four widely understood categories:

1. **Basic Skills** — primarily in reading, writing, and arithmetic.
2. **Knowledge Skills** — the content and concepts learned and used in the major academic subjects.
3. **Higher-Order Competences** — the skills of planning, organizing, analyzing, communicating, and producing that cut across and transcend specific content and skills.
4. **Role Performances** — the complex demonstrations of all the above in dealing with real-life issues, problems, and projects.

The first two categories have been the primary focus of conventional school curriculum and testing for most of this century and are emphasized in virtually all the efforts to move from a conventional to a Learning Success paradigm of schooling. The latter two categories represent the focus of the decided shift in perspectives about learning and outcomes embodied in the Life Performance paradigm. They include the more complex forms of mental processing (higher-order competences) and the much more complex, realistic, and challenging forms of applying all of these other kinds of learning in real-life situations (role performances).

All nine reformers advocated improvements in areas 1 and 2 because they are basics and minimums students must have. Levin, Schlechty, Sizer, and I were also outspoken in our criticism of these minimums remaining the standards on which America would continue to define student achievement, its educational targets, and its measure of educational effectiveness. In short, we argued that these familiar basics:

- Tap only the lower levels of learning and performance essential for adults in the Information Age,
- Reinforce an extremely constraining approach to teaching, and
- Encourage a misguided reliance on paper-pencil testing as the measure of student competence and readiness for the adult world.

Such tests cannot begin to tap the complex competences required of adults. Tests are educentric and reinforce a static and artificial structuring of curriculum into segregated content areas — areas sanctified 100 years ago by the Committee of Ten, which don't match how the brain functions or life works. Worst of all, they dilute our vision of what educational preparation should ultimately do for young people in the '90s and beyond. In effect, the ultimate illusion that they perpetuate is that schools are good when they produce high test scores. But this is saying that schools are effective because they teach students to do school work well. Our paradigm was dramatically different. It held that schools are good when they equip all their students for the future they will encounter as young adults. And, as Lee Iacocca said at a major education conference in 1992, in that future they won't be getting paid to do traditional school work.

Individually and collectively we were, in effect, challenging the operational assumptions of the entire educational establishment: textbook publishers, testing companies, accreditation agencies, practicing educators, professional associations, teacher training programs, subject matter organizations, high school graduation requirements, state laws and regulations, college admissions criteria, and, most of all, people like *us* — college-educated people who had been through at least 16 years of education, which, we believed, had advanced our lives and careers.

If that wasn't enough, we further argued that schools had to fundamentally change the way they were structured and did business so that these life-performance abilities could be achieved. That meant redefining schooling, not merely reforming it, and it meant that anything less than paradigm transformation wasn't going to cut it. The gauntlet was down!

Expanded conditions of success. Conditions of success are the factors that directly influence students' chances of accomplishing the outcomes their schools say are important. The conditions of success, which all nine of these learning success reforms addressed in various ways, fall into four broad categories:

1. Beliefs and Priorities — the declared philosophy, assumptions, driving premises, defining orientations, and criteria for decision making districts and individual schools were committed to using with their students. This set of factors represents the viewing dimension of paradigm change because it contains the assumptions and beliefs through which reformers and educators filter their experiences, perceive what is possible and desirable, and define their roles and responsibilities.

2. Operating principles and processes — the standards and criteria for action and decision making teachers and administrators use in carrying out their broad instructional responsibilities, including planning, teaching, teaming, assessing, grading, and advancing students through the curriculum — everything that directly affects what, how, and how well students learn. Each of these nine reform efforts approached these principles and processes of schooling somewhat differently. Nevertheless, a clear focus on intended learning results for all students, expanding opportunities and methods to address different student learning rates and modalities, and high expectations about quality learning and performance were almost universally called for by each group. In fact, having a framework of declared principles and processes was so important to the success of school reform efforts that several reform groups required schools to have large percentages of teachers, administrators, board members, and parent representatives formally develop, endorse, and agree to consistently adhere to a framework of such principles before they would agree to work with the district.

3. Organizational structures — the patterns of organizing and utilizing time, space, staff, students, curriculum, and learning resources that directly affect students' opportunities to successfully learn the "significant" things in the curriculum. This repatterning of key organizational resources in order to expand opportunities for students to learn successfully is the true meaning of the often misused term "restructuring." Of the nine key groups under discussion, none was more outspoken about fundamentally restructuring the patterns of student-teacher

assignment and instructional delivery in high schools than The Coalition of Essential Schools. And no one was more outspoken about removing arbitrary time and eligibility constraints on student learning, assessment, and credentialing than Henry Levin and myself. But all nine of us believed that these rigid time and scheduling arrangements were causing otherwise preventable low achievement and failure and needed to be changed. Changing these time-honored, time-based routines, however, was unthinkable for many of the people we addressed. Schools had been structured this way since they had been students themselves, and they remained convinced that something more flexible would surely lead to chaos.

4. Support conditions — the processes, strategies, and resources used to mobilize interest in and commitment to "effectiveness reform" within a state, district, or school and to strengthen the integrity and impact of the first three conditions of success. Support conditions usually related to how well a school's or district's leadership and implementation strategies worked to bring about needed program and instructional changes — rather than being those instructional intervention factors themselves. Champlin, Comer, Lezotte, Phil Schlechty, and Bob Slavin were strong advocates of these factors and conditions, along with Levin and Sizer. Their reasoning was simple: Unless these organizational culture and leadership preconditions were soundly established, the desired changes embodied in the other three sets of success conditions would not come to pass.

   The only drawback to addressing these support conditions was that schools could easily get themselves so absorbed in them that the truly hard work of establishing the other three more directly operational conditions of success would never come to pass. Hence, the reform effort would eventually become a notable non-event.

Without question, the combined knowledge base and implementation strategies of these nine major reform approaches were sufficiently developed by 1993 that a serious, coordinated paradigm transformation effort could have eventually succeeded in the United States. But

each initiative was operating independently, and no agency with national visibility, resources, and influence made any effort to integrate, synthesize, and sponsor their collective work.

The Status of Federal Reform Efforts

By all appearances, the two major reform initiatives being launched at the federal level in 1993 were both extremely educentric. One was the New Standards Project (NSP), and the other was Goals 2000. Both lay far outside the dialogue generated by the advocates of the Future Empowerment paradigm.

NSP. Endorsed by the National Governors Association, the NSP was designed to define for the nation as a whole what students should know and be able to do as the result of their schooling experiences. Enormous time and expense went into polling experts and teachers from all over the country in all major subject areas regarding their opinions about what was most important for students to get out of their subjects. In most cases, the lists of standards for each subject was voluminous, prompting me to note the irony that there wasn't a teacher or policymaker anywhere who could meet all these standards because they were created by specialists for specialists; yet we expected every student in America to meet them. Not only was it impossible, it was the wrong paradigm of competence for the Information Age.

In 1993, the NSP was gearing up to develop authentic assessments for all of its educentric standards.

Goals 2000. Goals 2000 was an initiative begun under President Bush that President Clinton continued. It was designed to provide money to states and districts that undergo planning and improvement efforts to enable their students to meet the newly developing national standards. President Clinton had been a key player in developing this initiative while governor of Arkansas and was a natural for supporting it once in the White House. In 1993, the Clinton version of the initiative was just taking form.

The Status of State Reform Efforts

The states played extremely different and paradoxical roles in the emergence and loss of the Future Empowerment paradigm.

In the first decade of the paradigm's development and eventual public emergence — roughly 1973-1983 — the key reform figures of the era believed the states were a key problem. The often serious differences between state boards and state legislatures made this a period of state-level paradigm paralysis. All state regulations concerning anything related to the new paradigm were time based. The time-based/Industrial Age features of schools were endless. Also, the initiatives for school improvement that emanated from the states were wholly educentric — which was understandable given the period — and reinforced virtually everything the new paradigm ultimately sought to change: outcomes, curriculum, assessments, credit, and accreditation criteria, to name a few. Lastly, the most conspicuous initiatives took the form of extremely unimaginative minimum competency testing mandates that, in situations like Florida's, put the onus totally on the students and threatened to block their grade-to-grade promotion and high school graduation unless they passed.

The good news during this period, however, was the policy message to districts. States were saying that student learning, rather than courses taken, was going to become an increasingly critical factor in complying with state expectations and regulations.

The second decade, 1983-1993, turned into one of paradigm chaos. The release of *A Nation At Risk* and a host of other reports forced everyone at all levels to take school reform seriously. But this time they had very different and decidedly confusing paths from which to choose. One path was that of educentrism: improve the effectiveness of the elements of Iceberg paradigm. The other path (á la Levin, Schlechty, Sizer, and Spady, among others) was to transform the system and melt the Iceberg. But in the middle of this decade, a new force emerged, the business community.

Business leaders pointed to a variety of studies and reports on the Information Age labor market that showed that high school and even good college graduates lacked the skills to compete in the transforming labor market, and what students were taught in those academic programs didn't match what complex new careers demanded. With the help of reformer Willard Daggett, the business community could point to major differences between our high school curricula and

those of our chief economic competitors, Germany and Japan. Their mantra: We are handicapped by an archaic curriculum!

Many people began to see that they were right, which led many states to readdress their student outcomes.

In the meantime, Sizer and I kept harping away at what we saw as the lynch-pin of the entire Educentric Iceberg paradigm: The Carnegie unit — defined universally across the country as 120 hours of seat time. Sit there long enough, get Ds, and you graduate. States, we argued, had to give local districts relief from this rigid time structure if they were going to effectively make performance the real criterion for graduation. As I often said: You can't be outcome based and still be time based. They're fundamentally inconsistent.

Four Near Paradigm Breakers. To the best of my knowledge, four states — Florida, Minnesota, Oregon, and Pennsylvania — had gotten this latter message by 1993. Each was poised to pull the plug on the clock and calendar as the undisputed definers of schooling, curriculum, and credit. Florida and Oregon were also preparing to totally break paradigm by developing future-focused role performances as their definition of learning outcomes essential for high school graduation. With some resistance, Minnesota was revising a set of primarily higher-order competence outcomes, and Pennsylvania was poised to pass a set of 52 student learning outcomes classified into goal areas that ranged from purely academic to life performance. This eclectic Pennsylvania framework was intended to replace time as the determining factor for student graduation, and it served as the flash point of the heated national opposition to a broad range of reforms that all got called outcome-based education.

Many other states were still busy defining what they called outcomes, or desired competences, for their students in 1993. Their outcomes were usually locally developed combinations of knowledge skills and higher-order skills, but they had much more of a future focus to them because of the business influence. Nevertheless, most states had left the time issue unaddressed and were destined to remain what I called "time-based with outcomes sprinkled on top."

Although the number of states poised on the cutting edge of paradigm transformation in 1993 was small, it was absolutely clear that state policymaking bodies across the country had become strongly results oriented by that time. In 1993 most discussions in state capitals about educational reform centered on desired student outcomes. Today, the word "outcomes" is only spoken in private, behind closed doors.

The Status of Local Reform Efforts

Local implementation and change efforts take place in a policy arena shaped primarily by state laws and regulations. To deviate much from the old paradigm constraints that those regulations typically impose is to invite legal trouble. Therefore, superintendents and local school boards are generally on the safest ground when they avoid doing anything new of significance, which usually leaves reforms involving systemic change and paradigm transformation out of the question.

But by 1993, enough local superintendents had heard enough persuasive information about the Future Empowerment paradigm that they had taken action to change their schools. While many operated in virtual isolation, supported only by the national networks and support groups formed by these reformers, others created or joined consortia of districts in their areas that:

- Gave them inexpensive access to cutting-edge thinking and technical support;
- Allowed a critical mass of innovators and implementers to regularly and easily meet and share information;
- Allowed them to collaborate on solving common problems and on developing new strategies and products;
- Provided a mutual support network for reform and innovation in their states; and
- Enabled them to mount a concerted lobbying effort with their state agencies and state boards to create more forward-looking reform policies and regulatory incentives or waivers that would encourage and legitimate their local reforms.

I was directly involved in helping form such consortia in Arizona, California, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, and Wisconsin, and I know that several of the other national reformers had done the same thing through their work. Significantly, almost all of these local consortium efforts were funded out of district budgets, although some received supplemental funding for promising innovations via competitive grants from their states.

If all of this activity constituted "the smoke" of paradigm transformation, the real issue for all of us remained: Where's the fire? Who was really doing something that was significant in terms of defining more powerful, future-focused learner outcomes or implementing the conditions of success in ground-breaking and effective ways? And who was getting better learning results that showed that the tremendous efforts being made locally by key leaders and implementation teams were worth it?

For those who took the most rigorous interpretation of the learning success features of the Future Empowerment paradigm seriously and were involved with outcome-based education, several districts were on a "must see" list in 1993. Each could show visitors either impressive improvements in results, exemplary designs and strategies, or both. They were Aurora, Colo.; College Community Schools, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Glendale (Arizona) Union High School District; Johnson City Central Schools, New York; Lucia Mar Unified School District, Arroyo Grande, Calif.; Mooresville, N.C.; Township High School District 214, Arlington Heights, Ill.; and Yarmouth, Maine.

Some were already receiving national attention for their pioneering efforts with the Life Performance paradigm as well. And for every one of these "national standouts," dozens of other districts were emulating them by taking bold steps to define and improve their learning outcomes and transforming the conditions of success on which those outcomes depended.

Because of exceptional building leadership and excellent district support, three individual schools were also on the national "must see" list: Alhambra High School in Phoenix, Ariz.; Grosse Pointe South High School in Grosse Pointe, Mich.; and Southridge Middle School in Fontana, Calif.

And for each of these schools hundreds of others were making serious inroads into improving their instructional systems and students' success in line with the Learning Success paradigm.

But, were there enough schools and districts in 1993 to create the critical mass necessary for tipping the policy and practice momentum in the direction of this new paradigm? Clearly not. But that momentum was steadily building through the tireless efforts of the reformers, their associates, and local implementers.

The Attack on the Paradigm

Each student shall gain knowledge of various cultures and lifestyles in order to foster an appreciation of the dignity, worth, contribution, and equal rights of all peoples.

These words brought down the Future Empowerment paradigm. They were the summary statement embodying Goal 6 of the proposed Pennsylvania Student Learning Outcomes, a goal called "Appreciating and Understanding Others." But they were not at all appreciated in 1992 by a small cadre of Western Pennsylvania conservatives who saw them as the overt endorsement of irresponsible and reprehensible lifestyles to which they vehemently objected and did not want their children exposed — especially in school. When they read this wording, they concluded that in the name of something called "outcome-based education," the state of Pennsylvania was going to force their children to value and endorse things like multiculturalism, premarital sex, homosexuality, and a variety of other assaults on their values, or else they wouldn't receive a high school diploma.

To them this statement — an outcome imbedded in a larger reform effort being called "OBE" — represented the worst possible combination of secular humanist philosophy, New Age lifestyles, and governmental tyranny, and they were determined to resist it. After their initial attempts to get these objectionable items changed or deleted from the state's framework of expected outcomes were denied, they decided political confrontation was their only recourse. By opposing outcomes, they were primarily attacking the life-performance elements of the larger Future Empowerment paradigm. By

opposing OBE, they challenged many of its key learning success elements as well. While the reform work most closely identified with the OBE label received the brunt of the attack, all reform work that had anything to do with outcomes was viewed with suspicion.

In other words, OBE became the opponents' catch phrase for virtually everything related to more progressive and flexible ways of conducting education. This was not a situation in which professionally acceptable standards of evidence were being used. To the critics, any practices alleged to be OBE were OBE; it mattered little whether the educators or experts they encountered claimed that these practices were unrelated to the essence and defining principles of OBE. In effect, there were two paradigms operating: theirs and ours. And ours lost.

The Mechanisms of the Attack

To a person, those who experienced this attack first-hand were astounded by its speed, intensity, organization, and breadth. These and many other mechanisms were used by the critics to stop the menace they called OBE:

- Large protest rallies were held in state capitals across the country, attacking any and all proposed school reforms having to do with outcomes.
- State legislatures and school boards were lobbied intensively to abandon plans to carry out outcome-based reforms.
- State superintendents were openly and vehemently criticized for their advocacy or support of anything containing outcomes or resembling OBE.
- Local and national radio talk shows were filled with ongoing criticisms of OBE as the certain destroyer of what little integrity and rigor was left in public education.
- Public forums featuring national anti-OBE "experts" were held throughout the country.
- Anti-OBE campaigns led by a small number of circuit riders were held in hundreds of local communities targeting everything in their programs that looked like OBE.

- Videotapes, articles, books, and huge binders of information carefully documenting OBE's dangers and proven weaknesses surfaced any time opponents chose to examine suspect practices in local districts.
- Throughout the country, hundreds of people were bused to school board meetings of neighboring districts to protest what they were doing related to OBE.
- Local superintendents, board members, and curriculum leaders were targeted and ousted.
- Anti-OBE "stealth" candidates were elected to local school boards and revealed their true policy positions only after winning.
- The Internet was filled with articles exposing the alleged weaknesses of OBE.
- A variety of national and local organizations circulated newsletters to policymakers and activists providing the opposition's unique take on the inherent or already "proven" dangers of OBE — often with each repeating the same misspellings and typos found in the others.
- And lists — everywhere there were people carrying lists of the names of key OBE advocates to watch out for (many of whom had never had anything to do with OBE at all) and educational practices that were dangerous because they were alleged to simply be OBE in disguise (Spady 1994). These practices included:
- Anything outcome-based, performance-based, or results-based;
- Cooperative learning and learning teams;
- Collaborative or service learning projects;
- Critical or constructivist thinking;
- Social competence and responsibility;
- Attitudes and values;
- Human psychology and development;
- Personal wellness;

- Sexual development or sexual behavior;
- Ungraded classrooms or schools;
- Flexible or multi-age grouping;
- Flexible or year-round scheduling;
- Performance rubrics or portfolios;
- Computer-based record keeping;
- Multicultural content;
- Whole-language reading instruction;
- Learning styles; and
- Strategic planning.

The Substance of the Attack

At the 1994 AASA National Conference on Education, I identified six major issues at the crux of the attacks against OBE. Two months later I became heavily engaged in a reconciliation effort with Robert Simonds, president of Citizens for Excellence in Education, one of the highly visible national opposition leaders. We discussed the major objections to, and misunderstandings about, OBE face to face on repeated occasions, and his observations and those of his colleague, Arnold Burron, were extremely enlightening. Consequently, I identified nine major areas of misunderstanding and disagreement (see Spady 1994). My current and more mature perspectives follow.

OBE as New Age ideology. The mountains of contrary evidence offered by reformers and educators were not sufficient to dispel the critics' overwhelming concern that outcomes were intended to promote a particular world view. The bedrock of their concerns were selected "outcome statements" developed by states and local districts, which they believed implied that students were to assume a particular point of view about a range of social, environmental, political, or personal issues. What they objected to was the liberal, humanist, New Age, multicultural, or ecumenical bias they detected in what they called these values statements.

Their mounting concerns about schools having abandoned genuine moral standards for student behavior were deepened when they saw outcome statements they believed advocated or tolerated an "anything goes"/New Age philosophy. Unfortunately, the critics portrayed the bias found in some statements as the defining characteristic of all outcomes.

OBE as psychological manipulation. Moral and philosophical affronts intensified when the critics noted that these objectionable statements were declared by educators to be "expected outcomes." To them this meant that all students, including their own, were going to have to publicly demonstrate the substance of these statements or risk not graduating. This they regarded as psychological manipulation and coercion of their children.

Because they found some of these statements to be morally objectionable to themselves and to their children, they found it morally intrusive that (they believed) their children would be forced to advocate these things in school against their personal beliefs and will, and that schools (i.e., the state) would be testing and evaluating their children on them. This meant that their children were going to be judged and graded on the correctness of their beliefs and their adherence to a humanist (read anti-Christian) ideology. That, they argued, was moral coercion.

Because the leaders of this protest movement chose to characterize all outcomes as psychological — which they took to mean affective and attitudinal in nature — they declared the purpose of outcomes to be mind control. This viewpoint was hammered home repeatedly, and no information from educators showing piles and piles of cognitive and academic outcomes and achievements altered their viewpoint.

OBE as the abandonment of academics. This position was a direct outgrowth of the first two, and it required the critics to ignore all kinds of evidence to the contrary and to base their conclusions on three major "facts."

- In an early article, Bloom had written about how key student self-concept was to learning motivation and success. This, the

critics alleged, meant that all outcome-based instruction was simply about self-concept and "feel-good fluff," not real learning.

- They had already declared outcomes to be psychological and affective in nature, which they further claimed was the opposite of academic rigor.
- Because these psychological and affective outcomes did not contain words that included specific or familiar mathematics, science, and history content, outcomes inherently weren't about academics.

Further, critics viewed outcomes as a liberally inspired way of getting schools to spend time promoting a humanistic, multicultural, social agenda that would further undermine the strength of the country. They believed these curriculum time wasters would also undermine the academic standing our schools once enjoyed because children would be getting even less academic content and rigor than they currently got, which wasn't nearly enough. Because they were able to document these positions to the satisfaction of their constituents, they came to have widespread credibility.

OBE as further government control. The very fact that the outcomes under dispute in Pennsylvania were being "imposed by the state" put the role of government right at the heart of OBE and the word government in the middle of all discussions. And, more than anything, protesters brought with them an intense dislike and distrust of government, including, I discovered from Marshall Fritz, executive director of the Separation of School and State Alliance, "government schools"—something I had always known as public schools. According to this line of thinking, public schools were simply another agency of the government undermining the authority and autonomy of families, and Pennsylvania OBE was the prime example.

To compound this issue, the OBE efforts going on in local districts and in states like Pennsylvania and Oregon quickly became associated with another visible governmental intervention in education, Goals 2000. As quick as a blink, OBE was alleged to be Goals 2000, which was seen as a federally inspired imposition on local educational prerogatives that many conservatives had fought bitterly in

Washington since its inception. From there the connection to the internationalist orientations of our federal government was made, and soon OBE was alleged to be a conspiracy of the internationalists and United Nations sympathizers to promote a new world order agenda on the United States — and Pennsylvania's "Citizenship" and "Appreciating and Understanding Others" goals proved it.

OBE as an unproven social experiment. Within months of the public protests against OBE, critics charged that no research or scientific evidence supported that OBE worked. Instead, they had gathered a range of data and argumentation to allege that OBE (which they felt generally embodied all of the liberal and psychological things that they didn't like about "progressive" education) had been going on for decades in the United States and was the very cause of the decline in reading and math scores, teacher effectiveness, and so on, which plagued our schools. Included in their research base were lists of places where OBE allegedly was tried, failed, and abandoned — virtually none of which was true or made any sense to those of us who knew the situations they were describing. Nonetheless, in a matter of months, OBE had gone from being decried as something new that was going to be imposed on local districts, to something that local districts had been doing for decades that had either not worked at all or had led to their downfall.

OBE as the exploitation of labor. Because Pennsylvania's Student Learning Outcomes framework also had a goal called "Career Education and Work," and because the opposition had already declared OBE to be the vehicle liberals and the government were using to undermine academic programs and integrity in local schools, it was easy for them to conclude that a key part of the new world order would be a capable and psychologically malleable workforce that would be the worker bees for the international cartels that actually ran the world and our federal government.

From all appearances, critics drew this conclusion from decades of experience with the public schools in which the "academic" students and the "career" students were involved in distinctly different curriculum tracks. To make "Career and Education and Work" outcomes a requirement for all students was further proof of a desire

to make all students worker bees, undermine academics, and "dumb down" an entire generation of young people to ensure that a supply of mindless drones would be available to keep the internationalist economic machinery going.

"Success for all learners" as dumbing down. Compounding this fear of a dumbed down curriculum and dumbed down America was OBE's commitment to success for all learners. How could there be success for all, critics argued, if some students were smart and some were dumb? The only way you could call the dumb successful was to lower standards to the point that even they could meet them. These lower standards, they argued, would then lead to an across-the-board dilution of expectations and standards for the smart as well, which would leave us with a homogeneous mass of incompetents. And all of this was being done so that the less able could "feel good about themselves" as learners.

OBE's critics viewed standards and success situated at opposite ends of a "fixed commodity/win-lose" teeter totter of achievement (Spady 1994). Because there's only so much achievement to go around, they reason, you either have to lower standards to get more success or lower the rate of success if you raise standards. They did not recognize that another alternative existed: an "expandable commodity/win-win" elevator of achievement. Although the latter had been the guiding metaphor of OBE for over a decade, we had not gotten that message across clearly enough to educators and parents.

"Success for all learners" as socialism. In addition, the opposition saw in OBE's commitment to "success for all" the embracing of an egalitarian, socialistic philosophy taken to extremes. When tied to their perception of the moral erosion, lowering of standards, and dumbing down that were inevitable consequences of OBE, critics ultimately saw it as a foreign-inspired socialist conspiracy to both morally and intellectually weaken the country. Furthermore, they saw the seeds of an anti-competition/anti-capitalist ideology that represented to them the ultimate goal of socialism.

• • •

The point that I and other reform advocates never got across to the critics of OBE (and to a lot of educators) was that the commitment to create successful learning for all students did not assume that students would all end up with the equal achievement of "minimums" and no more. OBE and the other learning success reforms were committed to raising expectations for all learners — including the smart — so that all students could be learning more and better. To do that schools needed to clearly define what they meant by outcomes and by achievement levels and then document how far students had gotten in reaching those levels.

We were not able to get that to happen convincingly enough and in enough places prior to 1993 to avoid fear setting in among both the critics and the educators involved at the technical tinkering and segmental change levels of reform. The critics feared what their perception of OBE would do to their children and the country. The educators, who neither understood nor could articulately address the pros and cons of these issues, feared what the critics would do to them.

Consequently, the major elements of the Future Empowerment paradigm that it took decades to nurture and develop was lost as a driving force in school reform on a national scale in less than two years.

CHAPTER 4

ASSESSING OUR LOSS

In February 1993, over 800 educators attended the annual National Outcome-Based Education Conference in Phoenix, Ariz. They left energized and anxious to make a difference in their home districts. Two years later the conference was canceled due to lack of attendance.

In June 1993, over 300 educators attended a major conference in Colorado focused on the "transformational" approach to OBE. They left energized and anxious to carry the Future Empowerment paradigm back to their districts. Two years later that conference was also canceled due to lack of attendance.

By 1995 numerous articles in both the regular and educational press had reported on communities from coast to coast being torn apart over issues surrounding the word "outcomes" and the term "OBE." Their political climates were described as negative, ugly, divisive, and polarized, and the relations between segments of the community and school leaders were often depicted as strained and distrustful. Just saying "the O word" in public was an invitation to trouble, so most educators and board members did what they could to avoid the inevitable confrontation.

Our Initial Losses

More than outcome-based education and the Future Empowerment paradigm were lost during this two-year period. Whether educators realized it or not, the entire profession of education received a stunning body blow in 1993 and 1994. The climate of optimism and innovation that seemingly broke through during the early '90s had turned into intimidation and retreat by 1995. Sure, new budget shortages arose in many areas in late '93, and lots of fiscal conservatives were elected to school boards and state legislatures in '94; these were inevitable and recurring situations educational leaders had learned how to face. But this was different. This was a serious backlash against outcome-focused change that ran across the board.

The losses associated with this backlash can be clustered and described in many ways, but seven losses stand out as the most devastating to educators. They are summarized in Figure 4.1.

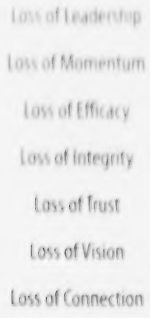

Figure 4.1 *Education's Key Losses*

Loss of Leadership

Generally, the people involved in any major change effort fall into eight broad groups:

- Generators
- Advocates
- Innovators
- Replicators
- Supporters
- Bystanders
- Skeptics
- Opponents

Anyone in any position in education can play any one of these roles. For example, a superintendent could be a generator of paradigm ideas regarding a specific change effort, or an opponent of those ideas — as could any teacher, principal, board member, or parent.

Generators and advocates were the key leaders in the Future Empowerment paradigm change process. Innovators, replicators, and supporters were their followers and actually got the new ideas in place and working. The success of this change effort depended on the leaders (1) continuously recruiting and expanding the number of innovators in their districts, (2) encouraging them to influence and recruit more replicators and supporters, and (3) converting bystanders into supporters. Between 1973 and 1993 progress was slow, but key examples of the Future Empowerment paradigm were under way when the momentum shifted.

As in guerrilla warfare, the opponents of the Future Empowerment paradigm gained their success by launching a surprise attack on many simultaneous fronts that caught the leadership cadre completely unprepared, seriously disrupting and neutralizing it. Between 1993 and 1995, state superintendents from Florida, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia who were recognized as advocates or supporters of the new reforms were either forced out of their jobs or sought refuge from the fire storm. Their departures made headlines in the educational press and sent powerful signals across the country that supporting new paradigm reforms and regulatory changes at the state level was a huge risk for anyone who valued job security.

Simultaneously, a similar fate befell advocate, innovator, and supporter board members, superintendents, curriculum leaders, and program specialists in local districts, but in far greater numbers. The shock waves of fear, intimidation, and caution that these confrontations and firings caused within their communities and states were devastating. Local educators hit the fox holes in droves just to survive, and this fear factor made it much easier for the opponents to convert innovators, replicators, and supporters into bystanders; skeptics into opponents; and bystanders into skeptics. It worked. Within two years, 20 years of intense effort by generators and advocates to shift the paradigm of education had been stigmatized and left for dead.

Gone were the presence, voice, influence, and example of key figures in local communities and state capitals who had championed student learning, new ideas, and productive change. Gone too were the national generators and advocates of these transforming and

empowering ideas, for they had become just as stigmatized as the concepts they had pioneered. No more attendance at conferences, no more materials purchases, no more strategic planning, no more staff development, no more open discussion, no more questioning the tried and true, and no more references to "the O word." John Champlin, Al Mamary, Kit Marshall, Spence Rogers, Larry Rowe, and yours truly became non-persons. It was as if we never existed—just like OBE. Systemic educational reform had been placed in a wasteland—and replaced by national and state content standards and test scores.

Loss of Momentum

The years of continuous effort by a number of generators, advocates, and innovators to bring the paradigm to where it was in 1993 plus the ten-year period of largely conceptual work that preceded it represented a natural evolution of new thinking, research, and action that began to accelerate rapidly during the early '90s.

It had taken seven years to finally establish an annual OBE conference that had the stature and substance to ultimately draw 300 people. It took an equal number of years to establish the stature and substance to ultimately draw 300 people to Colorado. It took many years also for some of the top generators, advocates, and innovators of the paradigm to be invited to present at state and national conferences of major educational associations—AASA being the key exception. And it took several years for the sessions of those new paradigm leaders to draw large audiences at those conferences. And we must remember that this a movement starting from the ground up—with no major stigmas, red flags, and black balls attached as they are now. True, when this paradigm transformation effort first began it had no visibility and name recognition, but it also carried no negative baggage. Today, board policy in many districts prevents staff from receiving funds to participate in or attend professional events such as these because the topics and presenters are suspect. Under circumstances like these, just getting back to ground zero would be a major achievement, let alone climbing the mountain again. The real bad news, however, is that a policy-driven loss of momentum such as this creates its own self-reinforcing downward spiral as illustrated in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 *The Spiraling Loss of Momentum for Change*

The less often you encounter new paradigm thinking and action, the less likely you are to want to pursue it, which means that your colleagues will then have even less to encounter and pursue, and so on. Add to this the diminished leadership to stimulate attention on these issues, and you have a lethal double whammy.

Loss of Efficacy

Educators across the board have experienced a serious loss of efficacy in two major ways. First, educators have lost ground as professionals. They can no longer feel confident about acting on the basis of best research and knowledge, or in making sound professional decisions in the best interests of their students. External pressure, not internal judgment, is driving instructional planning, content, delivery, and assessment.

Second, the impetus to apply new paradigm thinking to educational practice has diminished greatly. When impetus diminishes, so does the likelihood that educators will continue to apply new paradigm thinking to their work. And when the intensity and quality of application go down, so do the effectiveness of practice, its effect on students, and the results. What once made a big difference and gave those involved a sense of pride no longer does so because what they're doing just isn't the same as before. And, of course, this gives replicators, bystanders, and skeptics grounds for saying: "Gee, why bother? This new stuff doesn't work much better than what I have been doing all along anyway."

Loss of Integrity

Accompanying a loss of efficacy is a loss of integrity. The standards of using sound research, best evidence, objective analysis, accurate representation of ideas and data, and professional criteria regarding job performance have all been seriously compromised in the face of the intense political pressures that brought the paradigm down. It may be "smart" to change the names of things to get them accepted, but it is not professional. It may be "smart" to use methods and materials that do not pass the test of best practices in order to avoid public ridicule or sanction, but it is not professional. And it may be "smart" to constrain learning and success opportunities for students in order to keep your job, but it is not professional. Today's truly professional educators know it and feel the pain.

Clearly, the ideological strictures that have been placed on some school districts have put honest, effective educators in an enormous moral bind. They genuinely want to serve their students, but in doing so they can't say certain words, cite or use particular research materials, or attend professional development seminars. To keep their jobs they have had to fudge on their integrity. Yet without integrity, these educators compromise their professionalism, and without their professionalism they experience a further loss of integrity. In the absence of integrity, dishonesty and expediency prevail.

Loss of Trust

The advocates and innovators trusted the research, trusted the results they were getting with their students, and trusted that their

communities would support their efforts and successes as they said they would in public forums and planning sessions. Moreover, their colleagues trusted them. But fearing that they'd seen serious change efforts come and go in their schools too many times, many skeptics and bystanders waited to be sure things were "for real" this time. Once convinced that they were, many of them eventually jumped in and became supporters and replicators — just in time to have the rug pulled out from under them, again.

Advocates and innovators are inherently risk takers. They are motivated and energized by new ideas and promising possibilities. By jumping in first, trying out and testing new things, and sharing the results, they embody leadership and model professionalism for their colleagues. When they took initiative and pursued the Future Empowerment paradigm, there was more to risk than usual because they were asking their colleagues to make the big plunge into deep water. No more technical tinkering, folks! Don't be satisfied with segmental change! We won't discover our real potential or our students' potential until we're well into systemic change or beyond, based on the elements of the Future Empowerment paradigm.

Advocates and innovators are famous for being idealistic and resilient; but their colleagues rarely share their capacity for major disappointment. So don't expect many to cross the line the next time someone is looking for volunteers to try something new that's good for kids. They are likely to be in the staff lounge signing up their colleagues to become bystanders and skeptics.

Loss of Vision

Leadership and vision are synonymous. At a minimum, loss of leadership creates short-term loss of vision — the ability to see beyond the daily grind to what lies ahead and the new possibilities that exist. The attack on the new paradigm was a frontal attack on precisely this kind of vision: future-focused, open-system, research-oriented, imaginative, logical, and humane — orientations the opposition did not share.

Advocates and innovators are fueled by their vision and they love to share it with others. Many of them were targeted by the opposition precisely because their vision of the possible for their students was

confusing and threatening to those who could only see the paradigm of schooling in the conventional Educentric Iceberg way they had experienced it as students. Removing, demoting, and constraining these leaders were powerful ways of silencing or diminishing the expression of their vision.

But vision has a way of resurfacing, especially given the powerful forces of change, instantaneous worldwide communication, and information sharing that exist today. The opposition may have won the initial battle over vision, but they can't win the war. The Information Age is too big for them to control and constrain, and it is too big for public education to resist or deflect. And if the opposition can't win the war of vision, they won't be able to win the war of leadership either; those with courage and imagination will.

Loss of Connection

An extremely unfortunate disconnect between the public schools and a significant constituency in our society had already reached the danger level by the early '90s. When that constituency finally lashed out at the schools with a vengeance in '93 and '94, it only magnified the disconnect.

In March 1994, I was introduced to Robert Simonds, president of Citizens for Excellence in Education and the National Association of Christian Educators. Simonds was widely recognized as one of the key leaders of the attack on OBE, and I had just watched him decry OBE before a huge audience of educators. Our unplanned and totally surprising conversation lasted 35 minutes, and neither of us understood a word the other was saying. Our world views and frames of reference were so different that we couldn't comprehend the other's words. In truth, we were totally disconnected from each other's world and paradigm.

Simonds and I agreed to keep talking. It was difficult, frustrating, and time consuming for both of us, but after several months of regular meetings and phone calls, the common ground we hoped might emerge finally did. I learned an enormous amount about the philosophy, assumptions, thinking, and concerns of "Traditionalist Christians," and Simonds learned a lot about the motivations,

capabilities, and integrity of "New Age Liberals." With the unwavering and insightful help of our mutual colleague, Arnold Burron, we formally agreed to work together to bring peace, reason, and reconciliation to the many states and districts being torn apart over disagreements about educational philosophy and practice.

Simonds was filled with stories about how public school educators had impolitely refused to discuss the legitimate and reasonable concerns and requests of Traditionalist Christian parents. When, from his point of view, his constituents had turned their cheeks too many times on too many issues, they finally decided that confrontational politics was the only way to get educational leaders to take them seriously. They went all out. I had to acknowledge that I had not seen things from that point of view, and that building on the common-ground connections that he and I had established was the most important thing we could do together.

I am convinced that our schools will remain under constant duress as long as powerful, passionate constituencies are disconnected. Yes, coming to complete agreement may, indeed, be impossible; establishing common ground is not. It will just take enormous effort and patience.

I am also convinced that the best hope for regaining both the Future Empowerment paradigm and the other things professional educators have lost is to equip local leaders with the insights and urgency that compel them to inspire their communities with a vision of what their current schools can and must become. Without local leaders stepping forward to mobilize and encourage their communities, there is little hope that we can recapture these serious losses of momentum, efficacy, integrity, trust, vision, and connection.

Where We Stand Today

In Chapter 4 of my book on OBE (Spady 1994), I identify the four faces of OBE: classroom reform, program alignment, external accountability, and system transformation. These faces are the way both OBE and the larger Future Empowerment paradigm appear to people — the way they interpret and act on what they think these concepts are all about. Each face is dramatically different in focus

and scope, and each provides an excellent backdrop to understanding where school reform stands today as the result of our lost Future Empowerment paradigm.

The Status of Classroom Reforms

Classrooms are where the rubber meets the road; where the direct instructional interventions of teachers happen and formal student learning is most directly shaped. If change doesn't happen there, then there's little reason to believe that student learning will improve. But classrooms are only micro systems in the larger picture of paradigm change and need to be understood that way. They are a vital part — but only a part — of what it takes to shift the paradigm of education. Given our long-standing tradition of having self-contained/self-constrained classrooms, instructional improvement has been wholly dependent on what each individual teacher chooses to do and is capable of doing with students. In effect, focusing on individual classroom change compels us to launch two million individual reform efforts with no assurance of achieving collaboration or coordination across the hallways, which is a precondition for any systemic reform.

With this major caveat in mind, it appears that today's world of classroom reform is focused on four major themes. Each overlaps with and reinforces key elements of our lost paradigm. These themes are constructivist learning, integrated curriculum, learning modalities, and performance assessment. Each theme is research-based, has a variety of well-recognized generators and advocates, and receives loads of attention in the publications and programs of education associations. And note: Each is out of step with the educational preferences of those who oppose the Future Empowerment paradigm.

Constructivist learning. Constructivist learning is probably the dominant theme in instructional improvement today. It emanates from a variety of research studies and models of how the human brain works and how children actually learn. It is very much about learning success and potentially opens the door to future empowerment.

Its advocates argue that the brain builds frameworks of meaning and connections among individual pieces of information; that is, that things don't make sense and get remembered unless they relate to a

construct or concept already familiar to the learner. Consequently, they encourage learners to discover new things and make connections among them as a way of building systems of meaning and stimulating intellectual growth. This is done through active learning, with learners intensely engaged in accessing their own information, discovering and analyzing interesting things about it, and creating things with what they have discovered.

Constructivist learning is down on textbooks — boring tools for promoting passive learning — and high on critical thinking. Hence, the teacher's job is *not* to give students lots of facts to memorize (which is the paradigm that the critics favor), but to help students build meaning and connections among all of the things they encounter. The critics of the Future Empowerment paradigm, on the other hand, love textbooks that are factual rather than "ideologically biased," but intensely dislike both active learning (because of its broad focus and open structure) and critical thinking (because it endangers parental prerogatives to shape their children's beliefs).

Integrated curriculum. Directly supporting this emphasis on constructivist learning is an emphasis on Integrated Curriculum, which is closely connected to two other trends: interdisciplinary instruction and problem-based learning. All three approaches advocate having students build rich connections among ideas and information in whatever form they encounter them, and all three are congruent with elements of the Future Empowerment paradigm.

Integrated curriculum, interdisciplinary instruction, and problem-based learning represent a direct challenge to the century-old practice of teaching content as isolated subjects separated by the seemingly insurmountable walls called "the disciplines": mathematics, science, social science, English, and so on. That subject structure is cast in concrete via our system of graduation requirements, which stipulates how many years of particular discipline-based subjects students must pass in order to graduate.

Many reformers have argued that the tremendous lack of connection among courses prevents students from seeing connections that exist and inhibits them from deriving greater meaning from the content they encounter. But integrated curriculum is viewed negatively by

the critics of reform because they perceive it as an attempt to make curriculum artificially "relevant"— which to them means dumbed down, and the opposite of academic and rigorous. They only regard subjects with familiar, discipline-based names as legitimate foundations of intellectual learning, and they view attempts to alter this academic structure as unjustified experimentalism and a deliberate lowering of standards.

Learning modalities. For nearly two decades, educators have been exposed to the notion of learning styles. The generators and advocates of this approach demonstrate that some people learn more easily through hands-on manipulation, others through words, and others through pictures. From some, understanding comes when things are concrete and practical. For others, things only click when the broader concept is clear and fits into a bigger picture of ideas and relationships. Howard Gardner's (1993) notion of multiple intelligences expanded this field by suggesting that persons actually have multiple dimensions of natural ability, which schools typically fail to tap.

Research shows that the vast amount of teaching in the upper grades fits one single learning pattern: verbal-abstract. Those whose dominant learning modality matches this methodology end up being good students; those whose don't match it rarely do. Most verbal-abstract learners go to college, and do well there. Some then become teachers, and teach the way they learn best — further reinforcing this one modality. As a result, countless children end up classified as slow or poor learners even though they have many gifts that go unrecognized.

Since the learning modalities approach deliberately tries to discover and build these other dimensions of talent, the challenge for teachers is to diversify their instructional approach sufficiently so that more students can involve themselves successfully in the material being addressed. However, the critics of reform care little for this approach because they believe it is soft, opens the door to classroom activities that look suspiciously non-academic, and devotes disproportionate attention to those who lack the academic talents that, in their view, schools should spend more time cultivating.

Performance assessment. The evaluation (read "macro testing") of student learning is close to an obsession with elected officials. But

performance assessment is something different. Known by a variety of often-misused terms, performance assessment is about determining and documenting what students can actually do with what they know. It is about familiar terms like "competence," "application," "applied competence," "performance," and "authentic performance"— things people actually do when carrying out everything from simple tasks to complex projects. It's totally consonant with the life-performance elements of the Future Empowerment paradigm.

Performance assessment is not about filling in blanks on answer sheets; it's about having teachers establish the clear criteria that constitute a quality student performance, having students execute the performance, and assessing whether all of the essential criteria are present and complete in the performance. This takes profoundly more thought and planning than developing a 10-item test with each item worth 10 points. And because educators are caught in the extremely unfortunate illusion that scores are measures, enormous misinformed attention is being paid to helping teachers "score" these "authentic" performances.

The good news here is that performance assessment is compelling teachers to be much clearer than before about what demonstrations of learning really matter and fully embody the goals they have for their students. Consequently, teachers are dramatically expanding the range of things students are being encouraged to do to show that they are competent, not just knowledgeable.

What is not news is that the critics view all of this, including the words "rubrics" and "portfolios" that accompany performance assessments, as a smoke screen for avoiding "real, academic" evaluations. To them, scores *are* measures, and tests are the only valid way to objectively determine those scores. They want all subjectivity removed from the assessment process, and performance assessment looks to them to be about as subjective and nebulous as you can get.

The Status of Program Alignment Reforms

Program alignment transcends the individual classroom, grade level, and even school. It is a key way for a district to operate as a coordinated instructional system rather than a collection of autonomous classrooms. Program alignment is usually about "getting the whole

herd moving precisely West" in pursuit of clearly defined curriculum goals in the respective subject areas; it involves coordinating the efforts of all staff toward accomplishing these agreed-upon goals.

"Alignment" means — a direct match among the components in a system. In this case, those components include:

- The performance goals that have been defined for a subject area,
- The curriculum that directly matches and supports each goal,
- The teaching processes that directly match and support each goal, and
- The assessment processes that directly embody each goal.

The goals used to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment generally come from three key sources:

- National subject matter associations (which are all contributing to the New Standards Project).
- State curriculum boards (which are usually influenced heavily by the work of the respective national associations and the NSP).
- Local curriculum committees (which are usually heavily influenced by all of the above and which may contain a few parents and representatives of the community).

The goals developed and endorsed by any of these three sources will almost universally reflect the following template: This is what we want our students to know and be able to do by ___ grade.

Note that virtually all of this endeavor is subject focused and subject bound. It largely operates within the traditional subject areas and derives its direction and priorities from national, state, and local subject experts in those areas. While it gives focus and coherence to district programs, it is largely educentric — it uses what the system already is and does as the basis for defining what it should do in the future. The highly influential NSP is based on the traditional subject

structure and reinforces it by defining national standards and the time-based/grade-level structuring and delivery of curriculum. While the NSP emphasizes what it calls authentic student performance, the performance mainly involves tasks customarily done in class in each respective subject area. NSP needs a future-focused role performance thrust, not an educentric one.

One major factor forcing districts and curriculum specialists to look beyond the traditional subjects is the use of advanced technologies and the development of student technological literacy. Whether it's computers, the Internet, or robotics, schools are confronting a huge discrepancy between their traditional curriculum content, structures, and delivery processes and the world in which their students are living. And, as far as Lewis Perelman is concerned (1992), educators had better make this shift rapidly or they'll soon discover that *School's Out!* — the title of his book.

I witnessed Perelman's dazzling high-tech demonstration of these technologies to over 700 Illinois high school teachers a few years ago, and I was immediately persuaded by his argument that our century — old high school structures, curricula, and processes are obsolete obstacles to preparing students for success in the Information Age. The response his presentation received from the teachers ranged from ice-cold . . . to hostile! Then it was my turn to speak to the same group, and I've never written overheads so fast in my life. What I explained was that Perelman was describing what happens when the paradigm shifts from schooling to learning. Today's Information Age paradigm is about learning. We have the technologies that allow *anyone* to learn *anything* from *anywhere* at *anytime*. But our outdated Educentric Iceberg paradigm of schooling can't do the job because it still requires *specific students* to learn *specific content* in a *specific classroom* on a *specific schedule*.

The centerpiece of the current model is the time-based, hyperstructured, Industrial Age, assembly-line model of instructional delivery. Teachers aren't the problem, but the system they work in surely is — which sounds a lot like one of the major propositions in the pioneering organizational change work of Peters and Waterman (1992) and Deming (1986), the father of the "quality" movement.

The Status of External Accountability Reforms

For years I was surprised when educators and policymakers associated the term OBE with standardized testing. Externally imposed tests not aligned with a defined set of outcomes can't be an application of OBE, I thought, but the myth persisted. Yes, having a clear outcome framework inherently makes educators more accountable. And yes, accountability-minded legislators and board members are always promoting testing as the silver bullet of system effectiveness. But there the connection stops. Tests are not outcomes, and off-the-shelf testing isn't part of either the Learning Success or Future Empowerment paradigms.

I can't get excited about the current national, international, and state testing fervor. It's not that I don't want students to learn what's important for their futures; it's that I do want students to learn what's important for their futures. I believe the tests that we spend countless millions of dollars a year developing and administering only assess a narrow slice of those future role-performance abilities. Testing keeps us focused on how students are doing on what we know how to teach in school, rather than designing and achieving what will really matter once students leave school.

So how are things going in the world of external accountability reforms? Definitely stronger than ever! Every district is testing its kids on everything that moves because parents, board members, and taxpayers "want to know." Every state is testing its kids because the governor, the legislature, and the state board "want to know." And the president is proposing that we expand national testing beyond the National Assessment of Educational Progress because one good national test isn't enough. We need more national tests because the president, the Congress, and the American public "want to know."

If test scores could only give them what they *really* want to know, we could celebrate, but we'll need to do further testing to find our what that really is.

The Status of System Transformation Reforms

This is where we really need to take stock because this is what the Future Empowerment paradigm represents.

First, to the best of my knowledge, only five local districts that had used a future-focused Strategic Design process to develop a framework of role-performance outcomes for their students survived the attacks on OBE. They had such solid community involvement, understanding, and support they were able to dispel the accusations of the opposition carriers when they hit town. Many others inform me that they're doing their best to use what they learned before '93, but they're using different names for things, they're distancing themselves from "the O word" as much as possible, and they're not focusing on role-performance outcomes like they once did.

Second, among the paradigm-shifting states in 1993, only Oregon seems to be proceeding with the same fervor and spirit as before, but even its effort has been compromised by recent legislative action. Everyone else seems to be excited about improving student performance on their content standards (read "subject matter skills"). The time-based Carnegie unit is still the coin of the realm for student credentialing, although Oregon's system of higher education has instituted a real performance component as part of its admissions requirements.

Third, several new initiatives are currently operating to stimulate systemic change in schools on a national basis, and are achieving mixed results. They include:

- The New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC)
- The Annenberg Partnership
- IBM's Redefining Education Program
- Charter Schools
- School to Work

NASDC's initiative was launched primarily through corporate sponsorship in 1993. It awarded competitive grants to a small number of high schools across the nation that had proposed to reinvent themselves. The initial awards were made to highly diverse projects, two of which showed considerable promise as Future Empowerment models. The remainder were not as transformational, but they did

plan to incorporate a lot of technology and community involvement in their instructional delivery systems. Two years later NASDC held a second competition for districts or consortia of districts willing to up-scale the initial set of models. Keep an eye on their results.

Walter Annenberg has made $500 million available to families of schools throughout the United States. Each participating district was required to develop a plan for how it would establish a vital learning community that consistently followed a set of implementation principles established by the Annenberg Partnership with major input from Sizer. These principles focus primarily on support conditions. Among these principles, however, is a commitment to improve the learning outcomes of all students, but it is up to local districts to determine the nature of those outcomes. In addition, the planning criteria allow districts and schools to focus on specific program changes rather than requiring them to look at change and improvement systemically. If Annenberg wanted system transformation, he would have invested more wisely by betting on the Cubs to reach and win the World Series.

IBM's Reinventing Education initiative was launched in fall 1994. Its goal is to fund "…fundamental school restructuring and broad-based systemic change to improve student performance in public schools." The initiative emphasizes the use of high technology to advance this goal. Information provided on the first ten award recipients suggests that their improvements focused on significant components of their system (e.g., a comprehensive data-management system) or on specific instructional programs (e.g., interdisciplinary math/science curriculum tools) rather than on fundamental systemic change. A second set of awards was made in fall 1997.

Charter School initiatives have been launched in a number of states, and in considerable numbers. Their intent is to meet student needs (read "parent preferences") better than current public school do. While wide variations exist in the regulations and procedures for establishing a charter school in various states, four key points stand out:

- They are intended to be highly participatory and often suffer from decision-making ambivalence and overload.

- They are small-scale alternatives to the current system, not changes in the system itself.
- Most established to date are highly traditional rather than innovative or paradigm breaking.
- They are having problems with "hard-to-teach" students, just like the public schools.

With all due respect to their intent and potential for innovation, charter schools are not examples of system transformation.

School to Work, the name given to a joint U.S. Department of Education/Department of Labor initiative, makes it an easy target for those who thrive on the "work is for the dumb kids" stereotype. But School to Work is far from the vocational education of the past. This initiative is future-focused, committed to future empowerment that matters in the real world as well as school, strongly grounded in local communities through partnerships with business, and focused on the development of complex role-performance abilities and intellectual skills we all need for Information Age careers.

The good new is that its generators, advocates, and innovators understand and endorse almost all the Future Empowerment paradigm elements. Their biggest challenge will be breaking down the academic versus practical stereotype so deeply imbedded in old paradigm thinking and practice. Their second biggest challenge will be preparing themselves for the wave of opposition that has formed against School to Work, headed by some of the same people who led the crusade against OBE.

Conclusions

Enormous attention is being paid at every level of the educational system to improving learning and schools. On that we are united. Some of these major thrusts focus on the learner, some on the future, some on learning, some on schooling, some on technology, and some on testing. Some are innovative, most are educentric, and a few are transformational. This fragmentation of focus is what

might be expected after a major political cataclysm like the one we experienced in 1993, but in truth, reform efforts were already fragmented and educentric before then. It's just that now we have a lot less transformational thinking, ferment, and action in the reform mix than in 1993.

Today's paradox is that the most transformational things on the current reform landscape involve what is happening at the classroom level, not what is happening at the system level. Those trying to stimulate broad, systemic change seem to lack a template and criteria for what it is and what it involves. Clearly, it requires more than people at the local level currently recognize and are generally capable of addressing. But it also involves more than the current funders, sponsors, and policymakers at the top of the system have asked for or shown them how to do.

That missing template and how local leaders can use it to foster paradigm change in their districts are explained in Chapters 6-9. But first, I'd like to share with you a brief look at the lessons I learned from our losing the Future Empowerment paradigm.

CHAPTER 5

PERSONAL CONSEQUENCES AND INSIGHTS

By summer 1993, people saw, and I felt, no distinction between what the system transformation approach to the Future Empowerment paradigm represented and who Bill Spady was. I had so fully devoted the previous 15 years to developing a compelling picture of what America's educational future needed to be that the terms "Transformational OBE" and Bill Spady had become synonymous in the eyes of thousands of educators across the globe. It was an identity I held proudly.

Within a year, however, that identity had turned into a stigma that had devastating short-term consequences. An enormously busy calendar became and stayed empty. A vital and thriving consulting company closed its doors and left a cadre of wonderful friends and consultants searching for a way to make a living. Invitations to present at professional meetings and staff development workshops completely stopped. Close colleagues in local districts sent me letters (under duress, I suspect) denouncing me and my work. Firm agreements to collaborate with other consultants and reformers on major projects never materialized. Except for reporters from all parts of the country wanting me to defend the evils of OBE, I received no calls. By summer 1994, Transformational OBE was all but dead, system transformation had been driven underground, no one could say "the O word" in public, and my career as a contributor to educational change seemed over.

My Initial Responses

Without question, my initial reactions to this negative turn of events fell into three predictable categories:

- Disbelief that anything as sound and common sense as OBE could be so soundly trashed and abandoned by people.
- Frustration that the contributions I had made and wanted to keep making were being rejected everywhere I turned.

- Reflection on what I had done to cause all of this to happen and what I could do to get myself out of it.

The first two reactions were pure emotion and didn't help change anything. But the third opened some unexpected doors of insight that have transformed the last three years into some of the most productive and gratifying of my life. One of the major breakthroughs came when I realized that my plight was similar to what many able and motivated education leaders have gone through, sometimes several times in their careers. It's called being isolated and estranged from your colleagues and community and eventually fired because you're a genuine leader who is trying to change and improve things with which many people feel satisfied and in which they have an enormous emotional investment. The desire to make change is seen as the problem; and in politics — which is what major organizational change ultimately comes down to — perception is treated as if it were reality. I realized that if I could learn anything from a process of prolonged, serious reflection, then others facing similar circumstances might benefit from my insights and experiences. Here's what I learned.

Personal Insights

Thanks to the encouragement of several close friends, I went through a long process of personal stock-taking. Through this process, I examined and affirmed:

- Who I really am.
- What I am on earth to do (i.e., my fundamental life purpose).
- What my genuine strengths and limitations are.
- What I need as a human being in order to be fulfilled.
- Where I can make my greatest contributions.
- What kind of friends and relationships I choose to have.
- What obstacles I typically put in my own way.
- What needs to be the focus of my personal growth agenda.

What has emerged from this process so far is a set of insights that I am happy to share because they relate to fundamentals that will affect all education leaders' success in continuing to be the most effective advocate for children and schools we are capable of being. These key revelations, with some specific detail about my particular situation are:

Insight 1. Each of us has unique gifts and talents that don't go away or become irrelevant just because we encounter major setbacks.

I realized that I have a quick analytical and systemic mind that conceptualizes and organizes information and ideas succinctly, and I am able to translate and communicate those insights to help people understand things more clearly.

Insight 2. Even during turmoil, our visionary orientations and deepest human and spiritual values remain intact. In fact, trying experiences can actually strengthen them. They don't disappear just because people criticize them.

I have affirmed how natural it is for me to examine situations or problems by turning the obvious on its head to discover that there is a wealth of powerful possibilities in a novel way of approaching things. I have also affirmed how important honesty, responsibility, quality, and caring are to me in everything I do in life. These are givens in my life, and critics cannot undermine them.

Insight 3. We all need a network of close, honest friends — people who love us enough to tell us the frank truth about our strengths, weaknesses, personalities, and character. Mine were invaluable in this period of crisis.

Besides my family, several colleagues have stuck by me through thick and thin and bolstered my confidence during the darkest hours. They have also provided enormous intellectual stimulation and challenge and have never hesitated to give me tough, constructive feedback on anything I've said, done, or written. They are the people to whom this book is dedicated. Without them, this could have been a grim three years.

Insight 4. The reactions against us are rarely about us personally and should not be perceived that way; they are against the things we represent and advocate. Our viewpoints are not us, even though they accompany us everywhere we go.

A clearly negative newspaper reporter opened a conversation with me by stating: "Boy, there sure are a lot of people out there who don't like you!"

I replied: "That's too bad, because none of them has ever met me nor has any idea who I am as a person."

What I have also realized during this intense process of introspection is that I am not and never was OBE; nor is OBE Bill Spady. I've learned about and done so many things that have nothing to do with OBE, that most people who first meet me have no idea of my involvement with it or anything like it.

Insight 5. The adversity we encounter and the honest reflection and growing that we do as a result often increase our potential for contributing positively to the world — and our contribution doesn't have to be in the same arenas in which we were recognized before.

The work described in the last four chapters of this book is mainly new. Some of it represents leadership ideas and organizational change strategies that took form in my earlier OBE work, but most of it is the result of my intense collaboration with Chuck Schwahn over the past three years. The good news is that most of it applies just as well to education as it does to organizations in business and the private sector. My work over the past few years with companies completely outside of education has been extremely successful and gratifying.

Remember: What we have done well in the past doesn't dictate what we must continue doing. Making a positive difference in the quality of the world is what ultimately counts. Assess your real talents and go for it.

Insight 6. Finances aside, not having to go to work every day is an invaluable gift. It gives us the opportunity to enjoy our lives and relationships and develop ourselves in ways that the pressures of work seldom allow.

Money is essential, but it is no substitute for quality of living. Without question, I felt driven by the need to carry the Transformational OBE message everywhere I could, and I was leading an insane life on the road as a result. For years I complained that I'd never had a break from my intense career and had never had a sabbatical. Well, you usually get what you ask for if you mean it! Consequently, I've been on one for three years now. I've skied more than 60 days each year, learned to scuba dive, improved my golf game and bicycling skills immensely, made many new friends and reconnected with old ones, enjoyed healthier relationships with family, helped my daughter with house painting and repairs, and gotten more quality writing done than in the previous decade. The only thing that wasn't better was my income.

Insight 7. Forgiveness is the key to inner peace and the capacity to grow and contribute even more. Those who try to do us in may be mean-spirited, but we only sink to their level when we choose to fight them on their terms.

As described in the first half of Chapter 4, I devoted a great deal of time in 1994 and 1995 to developing a reconciliation and common-ground relationship with Bob Simonds, one of the major anti-OBE leaders. Before we met I thought Simonds was an irrational demon. By our third meeting I began to like him. By our fifth visit we had agreed to do all we could to quell the truly irrational confrontation over OBE and other related school reforms — and we spent a lot of time during the next two years attempting to get our messages about common ground and productive agreement across to any constituency that would listen. Few did, but my time getting to know and work with the real Bob Simonds was invaluable.

Letting go of the resentment I had toward people like Simonds is the most important thing I have done in the past four years. It gave me the unfettered energy to focus on the constructive side of everything. Doing so is a gradual process not an event, but it's worth every ounce of energy you put into it.

Professional Insights

As I engaged in this reflective process, many professional insights about the process of paradigm transformation came to me. I have organized the most important of these in the hope that they will assist you in making the Future Empowerment paradigm a reality in our lifetime.

Insights About the Profession of Education

Theoretical debates have gone on for decades over whether education is a true profession. Regardless of which side seems to win based on the criteria and evidence used, clearly:

Insight 1. There has been a major shift in orientation by educators over the past two decades with regard to their reliance on the professional literature for guidance. Seat-of-the-pants planning and decision making are waning. This has been accompanied by a major increase in women in major administrative and leadership roles — positions earned through demonstrated knowledge and expertise rather than success as a coach.

Insight 2. Given that national professional associations took a hands-off stance toward the attacks on OBE, and with no visible legacy of significant change and reform in education to use as a guide, it is natural for most educators to run for cover when intense opposition to reform surfaces.

Insight 3. New paradigm thinking rarely emerges from teachers and principals. Most of them describe their work in terms of the students they serve or the subject they teach. They use established practice rather than research, theory, or systems thinking to guide their daily decisions and actions.

Insight 4. The monopoly era in education is over. Charter schools and more are here to stay. Professional associations will be under increasing pressure to ensure that their members perform competently and meet client demands. The viability of the public school system depends on its ability to promote the shift from system preservation to future empowerment.

Insights About Leading Paradigm Transformation

Leadership means being out front. Out front in terms of vision and perspective, out front in terms of ideas and information, out front in terms of decisions and operating principles, out front in terms of

clear communication, and out front in terms of addressing things that aren't working. From my perspective (see Spady 1996c), the terms "leader" and "change agent" are one and the same — you can't be one without being the other.

Major educational change doesn't happen without informed, committed leadership at the district and building levels willing to be out front, ask tough but empathetic questions, and disturb the institutional inertia that blocks productive change. Paradigm transformation doesn't happen without these same qualities and practices being applied by paradigm generators and advocates at the national and state levels. My most significant lessons about leading paradigm transformation relate to what it takes to be continuously "out front."

Insight 1. Genuine leaders in every state, district, and school building are doing their best to overcome the inertia of their organizations, transcend their bureaucratic responsibilities, and endure criticism from colleagues for not accepting things the way they are.

I found genuine champions of change everywhere I went for 20 years: in state departments of education, regional agencies, district offices, school buildings, and classrooms. They were the reason I pushed for paradigm transformation for so many years. These individuals saw the compelling merits of paradigm transformation and did all they could to share it with their colleagues. They were motivated by a deep sense of purpose and willingness to advocate sound ideas and were the risk-takers who stood out from the crowd.

Because they were often isolated geographically, organizationally, and psychologically, they were hungry for affirmation and support in their sometimes lonely quest to make change where it seemed unwelcome or extremely difficult. And while I did what I could to share my most important and latest insights and to put them in contact with like-minded peers, I always wished that I could have given them more — more ideas, more information, more encouragement, more contacts, more examples, more recognition, and more exposure. Many of the local, state, and national networks we created were highly effective in filling these needs, but many of these unsung heroes and heroines managed to accomplish an enormous amount

without these supports. My deepest admiration goes out to all of them. These state and local champions carried the implementation of the Future Empowerment paradigm on their shoulders until it was decidedly lost. They deserve all the credit and support their communities can muster.

Insight 2. No one gets paid for being a champion of paradigm transformation.

Regardless of your position — superintendent, national reform leader, principal, teacher — there's no bonus pay for leading change. In fact, there's often a lot of hostility and grief. For years I stood in awe of people at the local level who devoted incomprehensible amounts of time, energy, and talent to making the Future Empowerment paradigm work in their schools and received neither formal recognition nor financial compensation. They acted because making a difference mattered to them, even if it didn't to some of their colleagues. In this regard education is the perfect laboratory for testing commitment and professionalism: namely, those who have and exercise them in great abundance do so out of pride and integrity; those who don't are the first ones out of the parking lot at the end of the day.

Insight 3. Effective leadership is selfless, principled, persuasive, and persistent. Those who try to lead with their egos, personal agendas, and positional authority cannot establish or sustain the legitimacy and respect necessary for the trying times and challenges that accompany major change efforts.

The more I interacted with local advocates of the Future Empowerment paradigm, the more I marveled at their capacity to generate interest out of resistance and enthusiastic participation out of initial passivity. They operated from a combination of deep purpose and high-level principles, which they projected in all their interactions with staff and community members. Self-interest, expedience, and convenience simply didn't exist as reasons for doing anything. Because these educators gave so completely of themselves and held themselves to such a high standard, they could appropriately ask the same of their colleagues. And some of their most impressive demonstrations of leadership effectiveness came not from public displays of knowledge of and commitment to the Future Empowerment

paradigm, but from the powerful one-on-one interchanges they had with teachers or other colleagues — dialogues that introduced better ways of looking at both daily practice and long-term results and that changed the nature of the informal conversations and culture of their organizations.

Insights About the Language of Paradigm Transformation

Of all the insights I had about the emergence and loss of the Future Empowerment paradigm, none came as more of a surprise and shock to me than the ones about terminology. Each day of my career has been an intense exercise in learning about the meaning, power, and clarity of words — which words accurately and clearly portrayed new or potentially controversial ideas; which had appeal and would be easy to remember; which had different meanings for different audiences and could easily be misinterpreted; and which were clear red flags that required lots of explaining if they were going to be used at all. I prided myself in working and reworking overheads and handouts many times over to make them as clear, understandable, and useful as possible. But it wasn't enough. As noted in the latter half of Chapter 3: Words brought the paradigm down.

Insight 1. Disagreement over ideas is inevitable but misunderstanding about what they are is not.

Advocates of an idea cannot expect everyone who hears their message to agree with it, but they have an obligation to make sure that what they mean is what gets represented. Presenters cannot take anything for granted, especially when dealing with audiences who do not share their professional frame of reference and vocabulary. They must be extremely careful and precise in making every aspect of their message as clear and understandable as possible.

Insight 2. Advocates of major change have an obligation to portray every key idea they present in the simplest, most familiar language possible, with clear examples of what it means and what it doesn't mean both conceptually and in practice.

This is especially true for any idea that may inherently divide groups on ideological grounds. Leaving ambiguities to be interpreted and

resolved by the listener invites misunderstanding, distortion, and disaster. What the idea means in terms of concrete practice and consequences for those involved cannot be spelled out too clearly.

Insight 3. Because education is loaded with terms that have enormous symbolic and ritualistic meaning, hard data and rational explanations only satisfy a minority of those involved in or affected by a change effort. Hence, symbolic language must be preserved even though the substance and underlying meaning of those symbols may be altered as the change effort takes hold.

As a rational researcher, this was one of the most difficult lessons for me to learn because I thought that the essence of the Future Empowerment paradigm was inherently logical and made enormous common sense to people. I was right about people like me. But what I had to learn is that many people are unfamiliar with and don't care much about the technical meaning and substance associated with particular concepts. They need to be reassured that schools are going to improve a lot but not be transformed into something they don't recognize or can't identify with.

Insight 4. Certain key code words for fundamentally different philosophies of education and living automatically trigger debate and reaction within districts, regardless of the care taken to explain what they do or don't mean in a particular change effort. These words include: academic, grades, standards, competition, cooperative, basics, self-concept, values, multi-anything (cultural, age, or disciplinary), and diversity.

The introduction of any of these virtually unavoidable words into the dialogue about school change is guaranteed to divide groups who hold fundamentally different views of their meaning, importance, and implications for the education of children. Because the phenomena represented by these words are central to what educational systems are and do, and since fundamental differences in world view will continue to affect public education, I recommend two key steps:

1. Make an extraordinary effort to reduce the ambiguity and misinterpretation of these terms and show what they will mean in actual practice.

2. Establish alternative programs that allow parents and students to choose a path they find congenial with their world view.

Who knows, we may discover large numbers of parents willing to opt for the Future Empowerment paradigm once it is made available to them as a choice.

Insights About the Politics of Paradigm Transformation

As all of the foregoing suggests, America is a country divided over issues of educational change. Are Americans in favor of educational improvement? Yes, unanimously. Are Americans in favor of systemic educational change? Maybe, but only if they understand it and it appears to be to their particular advantage. Are Americans in favor of something called paradigm transformation? No, not if it means fundamentally redefining, redirecting, restructuring, and reengineering what they have always known as "school." The public still thinks there are too many things about the current Educentric Iceberg of education that seem to work and make sense to justify transforming everything.

While this continual embracing and reinforcing of the term "school" may be the source of the key difficulties that the Future Empowerment paradigm has faced over the past decade, it underlies several key realities about the politics of paradigm transformation that have been disappointing lessons for me and my colleagues.

Insight 1. No natural political constituency for paradigm transformation exists except, perhaps, the politically disenfranchised who benefit least from the status quo.

Contrary to the allegations made by some of the paradigm's opponents, its emphasis on success for all is not an attempt to rob Peter to pay Paul, but an attempt to elevate the entire distribution of student learning from where it now exists. By emphasizing "all," the paradigm might seem to favor disadvantaged children whose school achievement typically falls far below those of the middle and upper middle classes. If any group potentially has the most to gain from the paradigm's success, it is they. But because this constituency was attracted primarily to three other reform programs — Levin's Accelerated Schools, Comer's School Development Program, and Lezotte's Effective Schools initiative — it was not aligned with the

OBE part of the larger reform effort and had no specific reason to fight for its survival when things got difficult in '93 and '94. Because these other three reforms were strongly associated with urban and minority students, they fared the best during the attacks because the opponents, being primarily white and middle class, were focused on what was happening in the schools their children attended.

Insight 2. What begins as a knowledge-driven set of initiatives to improve teaching and learning can turn into hardball politics when the nature and scope of the paradigm transformation threatens to change the entrenched regulatory structure of education. All reformers and educators need to be equipped to fight such tough political battles.

As long as the Future Empowerment paradigm was represented and interpreted as "instructional reform"— requiring mainly changes in educator thinking and behavior— it remained outside the realm of major politics. The paradigm was built on a foundation of well-crafted research, powerful theoretical insights, and highly effective implementation in a small but widely recognized number of locales; and its credibility with educators rested on rational argument, demonstrated feasibility, and persuasive results. But once this paradigm required significant changes in policy and law — especially at the state level — it became political, and the attacks against it took on a different character — deep misunderstanding, serious distortions, blanket misrepresentation of information, quotes out of context, and guilt by association — tactics that caught reformers and educators unaware and unprepared. To their credit, they continued to travel the high road of rational discourse and substantive accuracy while their opponents chose to bypass accuracy in favor of emotionalism, direct confrontation, and intimidation. Unfortunately, rational discourse lost.

Insight 3. Paradigm transformation can be defeated politically because neither the reformers nor state and local leaders have the necessary and time-consuming political groundwork, coalitions, and support to counteract the intense pressures of the opposition.

The attacks on the paradigm revealed two fatal weaknesses. First, once it became political, the paradigm required advocates outside

the educational system itself, and neither the reformers nor local educators had done what was necessary to inform and marshal influential public spokespersons and constituents to their cause. Few parents were sufficiently informed to provide a local counter-force against the vocal opposition; the business community was significantly involved in the reforms in only a few states; few state legislators or board members understood the issues well enough to counter the critics' arguments; and the opposition effectively flooded a lot of broadcast and print media with its version of the truth.

Second, the paradigm's support within the field of education was a mile wide and an inch deep. For every district that received national or regional attention for its pioneering change efforts, there were hundreds either indifferent to or barely involved in making these changes. And even within the strong districts significant numbers of bystanders and skeptics remained within the ranks who offered no support when the going got tough. In addition, few educational associations involved themselves directly in these changes at either the state or national levels.

Insight 4. Small numbers of well-mobilized people can shape major political decisions by exploiting the public's lack of involvement in politics and its fears about change.

During the attacks on the Future Empowerment paradigm, the general public and educational community got completely out-hustled by the opposition. A small number of highly motivated people filled what turned out to be an enormous influence vacuum with regard to the new reform agenda at the state and local levels. Using remarkably effective information networking, they portrayed a negative picture of these proposed reforms via every medium available. This highly charged portrayal used "documented evidence" to galvanize the resistance of large numbers of skeptics and potential opponents and to dramatically raise the level of concern among bystanders and potential supporters. As a result, all but the most ardent advocates and innovators ran for cover from what appeared to be nothing but trouble, and found themselves in a triple bind.

1. Only those with an intimate knowledge of the new paradigm reforms and the research on which they rested could articulately

rebut the allegations that were being made. This eliminated almost all non-educators from the heart of the debates and left reform advocates in what appeared to be a self-serving position.

2. They lacked a mobilized constituency to fight aggressively. By the time they were able to make the public aware of the attacks and the issues involved, many a lethal blow had already been struck.

3. No amount of data about the demonstrated effectiveness of "the new" could counter the security most people felt in "the familiar," especially when so many emotionally laden accusations were made about the legitimacy of the new paradigm research.

Fear easily won out over promise.

Insights About National Paradigm Transformation Efforts

At a conference in 1989, Larry Lezotte likened a school to a collection of self-contained classrooms unified by a common parking lot. This line got a huge but nervous laugh from the audience. Little did Lezotte or I know at the time how prophetic that analogy would be to the school reform movement in the early '90s.

The major reform leaders described in the first half of Chapter 3 were an extremely dedicated, hard-working, high-integrity, highly intelligent collection of private entrepreneurs, each offering schools and districts a version of the better mousetrap. Occasionally we appeared on state and national conference programs together, sometimes to promote reform and sometimes to debate the fine points; but most of the time we did our own things. Some of us were good friends, some of us didn't even know each other, and by the early '90s some of us had become undeclared competitors.

In retrospect, we were nine self-contained/self-constrained/self-interested movements.

Insight 1. The Future Empowerment paradigm and the critical conditions of success needed to achieve it are bigger than any individual reform effort and require key elements and strategies from most of them to be successfully implemented.

Had some individual, agency, or organization had the insight, credibility, influence, and courage to unify and synthesize these separate efforts into a mega-strategy for paradigm transformation, the Future Empowerment paradigm might not have been lost, and America might be facing a far brighter educational future. Instead, corporate leaders and governors have jumped into the fray with their highly educentric, testing-oriented conception of school reform; and most of the nine reformers continue to promote their work in isolation from the others.

Insights About Local Paradigm Transformation Efforts

Given assurances of confidentiality, local educators will be brutally honest. They know the heroes and villains in their districts, and they will name them. They know the histories of the plaques on the walls and the skeletons in the closets, and they will describe them. They know the larger and smaller political forces at work in their buildings and communities, and they can identify their dynamics and implications. But most of all they know when their district and building leaders are for real and when they are just blowing smoke, and can predict the eventual success of their change efforts with great accuracy from those characterizations.

The genuine leaders in local districts saw the merits of the Future Empowerment paradigm, advocated its elements to their colleagues and communities, and painstakingly guided its implementation. It was only after these local leaders had created some genuine successes that the people in the state capital began to take note. Here's what I learned from their efforts.

Insight 1. With few exceptions, every district that distinguished itself by pursuing paradigm transformation had an enlightened and committed superintendent who actively participated in the reform effort, taught board members what they needed to know about it, and cultivated and empowered others as partners in the change process.

Insight 2. The kiss of death was being told by curriculum leaders or building principals that they had to do an end run around the superintendent or the board in order to engage in serious reform. They could almost never run far enough or fast enough to pull it off.

Insight 3. Exceptional building principals are able to accomplish some wonderful things with their staffs — even without strong district support — but their successes rarely carry over to other buildings in their district, especially among high schools.

Insight 4. In every district, a huge reservoir of motivation for change and improvement remains untapped. It just needs to be stimulated and supported. This reservoir typically resides in the people who gladly work with less successful students and know how to engage them in purposeful learning.

Insight 5. You can always identify the greatest resisters to local reform. They get to your presentation early to capture a seat in the back row so they can read the newspaper or do their knitting during the session without being noticed by their peers.

Insight 6. The most future-focused, non-educentric, paradigm-shifting thinking and designs take shape in local districts, not in state capitals. The loss of their momentum, visibility, and recognition was the greatest blow paradigm transformation experienced.

Insight 7. In the few years that future-focused strategic planning and designs were being actively pursued, few districts were able to get their visionary plans into full operation before the attacks began. What they might have become is a great part of our loss.

Insight 8. Most practitioners are very curriculum-focused thinkers. They need a great deal of help learning to think outside that constraining box about student competence and performance beyond their classroom and school. But once they do, they never want to go back.

Insight 9. Paltry commitment and resources are devoted to paradigm-shifting professional development in most districts. Those districts that made significant reform strides made serious budget commitments to continuously build staff capacity. Without such commitment, their efforts would have been non-events.

Insight 10. The knowledge base that drove the future empowerment reforms has little bearing on programmatic and operational decisions in most schools, but the schools and districts that leapt ahead in the early '90s were constantly using this research base to improve their effectiveness.

Insights About State Paradigm Transformation Efforts

One could easily argue that the phrase "state paradigm transformation efforts" is an oxymoron. States don't do paradigm transformation; they do educentric regulation and evaluation. Yet states from coast to coast have actually played a more enlightened and aggressive role in promoting improved student learning during this past decade. Observing this has taught me several things.

Insight 1. State-level policymaking is governed by the rules and forces of macro politics, not by the values, priorities, and rules of evidence of either educational research or classroom practice. When policymakers leans heavily on educators to shape reforms, the result is educentric solutions; when they lean on non-educators, heavy-handed accountability requirements are usually offered as the solution. Given this reality, state policy is inevitably going to be institutionally conservative and inherently insensitive and responsive to the elements in the Future Empowerment paradigm.

Insight 2. The state-controlled regulatory structures that govern education inhibit all but technical tinkering and segmental change. They were designed for and perpetuate Educentric Iceberg thinking, purposes, organizational structures, and contractual relationships. Paradigm transformation will remain quite literally illegal as long as the clock and calendar are the legal definers of education.

Insight 3. States are convenient whipping posts both for national leaders seeking to blame someone for poor educational performance and for local educators needing to pass the buck upstairs.

Insights About the Process of Paradigm Transformation

Paradigm transformations don't start out that way. They begin with a bolt out of the blue — someone's new insight that opens up unrealized possibilities and eventually turns old ways of viewing and doing things on their heads — or with a serendipitous discovery — some new tool.

gadget, or phenomenon that opens up whole new ways of carrying out important life functions. In either case, they don't start out as master plans; they evolve, just as the Future Empowerment paradigm did.

As the evolutionary process of paradigm transformation unfolds, a critical mass of interest and implementation begins to develop. It is then that the larger scope of change and possibility emerge and the new ideas begin to bump against established practice with some real force. That action creates a reaction that puts the fledgling paradigm shift to the real test, requiring its generators and advocates to address its potential applications, merits, and implications with people at all levels of the affected institution or society.

My most significant insights about the Process of paradigm transformation relate to this critical stage of scaling up and boundary testing.

Insight 1. True paradigm transformation is a colossal process that involves redefining and reshaping entire institutions and the belief systems and cultures surrounding them.

For transformations of this depth and magnitude to occur, fundamental and widespread shifts must occur in the perceptions, beliefs, values, and preferences of the countless people involved in and directly affected by the transformation; prevailing patterns of practice and action that define the operational realities of the new paradigm; and the laws, regulations, and institutional structures that govern and reinforce these perceptions and practices. Failure to explicitly address any one of these three arenas can undermine the paradigm's development, acceptance, and influence.

Insight 2. Paradigm transformation requires continuous attention to changing the perceptions and beliefs of a critical mass of potential implementers and their constituents about what is possible and desirable.

A continuing dialogue must be established by paradigm generators and advocates in which potential participants and the constituents they serve are given new and compelling descriptions and explanations of how familiar, deeply held ideas and practices can be viewed and defined in fundamentally different ways (as in John Carroll's

insights about aptitude). The more persuasive and compelling these new possibilities, the more old ways of viewing and doing things will eventually cease to make sense.

Insight 3. Most people need to see a new paradigm and its essential elements work well before they will be persuaded by any of its value-, theory-, or innovation-based ideas.

Successful, carefully documented action by advocates and innovators is the key to changing the perceptions and actions of the numerous bystanders and skeptics who ultimately hold the balance of power over a new paradigm's acceptance. Without demonstrable models and effective prototypes, only the most visionary and idealistic people will be persuaded of a new paradigm's potential merits, which forces advocates and innovators to balance the pressures for implementation speed and results with the need for quality. Constituents want instant results, but quality implementation takes time.

Insight 4. Advocates and local innovators must constantly lobby at all levels of the system to have procedural, structural, and regulatory barriers to implementation waived or lifted — either on a provisional basis or by guaranteeing that new practices will meet specific criteria or achieve agreed-upon results.

Unless institutionalized barriers are identified, addressed, and removed, all implementation efforts will face two major obstacles. The first is the institutional inertia of the old paradigm's practices and culture — usually manifested in the innovation-killing phrase: "We've always done it this way before, and no one has complained." The second is illegitimacy in the eyes of those devoted to the old paradigm and in the letter of formal rules, regulations, and contractual arrangements.

Precedent and regulation are the sanctuary of skeptics and opponents who have a vested interested in the failure of the new paradigm. You can count on a core group of them to raise every possible objection to innovations that require a departure from comfortable routines. In addition, with organizational obstacles in the way, authentic implementation of new practices may be impossible, thereby reducing its potential impact on intended results.

Insight 5. Paradigm transformation cannot succeed unless five key bases are firmly established and continuously reinforced throughout all levels of the system.

They are: purpose, vision, ownership, capacity, and support.

- **Purpose** is the fundamental reason that the new paradigm exists.
- **Vision** is the clear and concrete picture of the organization operating at its best, which guides its implementation progress.
- **Ownership** is the buy-in and commitment that organizational constituents feel toward the new implementation.
- **Capacity** is the foundation of knowledge, competence, and tools that staff have for carrying out the new practices successfully.
- **Support** involves the policies, resources, and assistance staff receive to implement the new paradigm successfully.

These five factors are the bedrock of successful leadership and change strategies. They are developed and explained in Chapter 6 and applied in the remainder of this book. In general, the schools and districts that took the time and effort to solidly establish all five weathered the attacks on the Future Empowerment paradigm far better than did those who didn't give these factors the attention they deserved. Insightfully addressing and establishing them is your gateway to productive change and successful schools.

THE FUTURE EMPOWERMENT PARADIGM

CHAPTER 6

ESTABLISHING THE BASES OF AN EMPOWERING LEARNING COMMUNITY

The remainder of this book is designed to help you transform conventional school districts into learning communities that embody the key elements of the Future Empowerment paradigm.

Empowering learning communities are places where students, staff, and community members all embrace and implement key elements of the Future Empowerment paradigm and engage in an ongoing process of continuous learning and improvement. To design and implement these new paradigm elements, you must establish, bolster, and sustain the five bases of paradigm change: purpose, vision, ownership, capacity, and support. As noted in Chapter 5, if any of these bases is weak or missing, change efforts almost always bog down or are undermined. Be sure that doesn't happen to you.

The Bases of Paradigm Change

The five bases of paradigm change determine the fundamental strength, integrity, and durability of an organization. Your goal as a leader is to establish and sustain these bases of productive change in all parts of your learning community. Here, in a nutshell, is a description of each and why they're critical to both your leadership effectiveness and your learning community's long-term success.

Base 1: PURPOSE —"It has meaning for me!"

> *Purpose is the deep reason your organization exists, which employees must share in order to find value and meaning in their work and constituents must endorse in order to identify with your aims.*

Purpose lies at the very heart of both organizational change and success. Establishing it is a leader's most basic and important task. Clear, heart-felt, personally fulfilling purpose allows employees and

constituents to easily recognize, identify with, and embrace what the organization is trying to accomplish. This, in turn, enables leaders to tap a rich source of employee and constituent trust, understanding, motivation, and goodwill. Without purpose, employees simply go through the motions, constituents wonder why you're doing what you're doing, and change efforts falter due to apathy and distrust.

Base 2: VISION — "It's clear and exciting!"

Vision is the clear, concrete word picture of what you want your organization to look like and be doing when accomplishing its purpose and operating at its best.

Vision is your blueprint and road map for change. A clear and compelling vision statement brings your purpose to life, provides a concrete description of what your organization will be like when operating at its best, and gives everyone in the district and community a clear direction to pursue and standard against which to measure their performance and results. The vision statement you create must demonstrate the quality and depth of the ideals your change effort will embody when fully in place. With it, your ideal future comes to life in the present. Without it, the specifics of your intended change remain obscure, people hesitate to try anything new, and no one is ever quite sure where they stand as things unfold — or unravel.

Base 3: OWNERSHIP — "I want to be part of it!"

Ownership is the strong identification with, investment in, and commitment to your organization's stated purpose and vision.

Ownership — the motivational fuel of successful change — is the result of employee and constituent investment in and commitment to what their organization is doing, which emerges when employees and constituents are given a significant role in planning, shaping, and implementing change. Others' involvement in both designing and carrying out the district's purpose and vision makes it "theirs" — not just "yours" — the leader's. Without ownership, passive compliance often prevails and change is widely regarded as "your idea" and "your problem."

Base 4: CAPACITY — "I can do it!"

Capacity is the knowledge, skills, resources, and tools needed to successfully make the changes implied in your organization's stated purpose and vision.

Capacity is the "know how" and "how to" element of productive change. It embodies the entire array of knowledge, information, understanding, skills, processes, technologies, and resources that enables employees and other constituents to carry out the desired change competently. Whereas purpose, vision, and ownership primarily affect employee motivation to engage in productive change, capacity is about their ability to do so. With it, individuals have the knowledge and tools to succeed. Without it, change becomes a nightmare of errors, frustrations, and disappointing results.

Base 5: SUPPORT — "The superintendent/principal is really helping!"

Support includes the policies, decisions, resources, and procedures that make it possible for employees and constituents to engage in and sustain the changes implied in your stated purpose and vision.

Support is the organization's "proof of the pudding" — its willingness and ability to put itself and its resources squarely behind its declared purpose and vision and the people it is counting on to make them happen. Support reflects organizational leaders' true commitment to the change process — their willingness to make decisions, commit people and resources, and operate in ways that directly align with organizational purpose and vision, and make it possible for staff and constituents to carry out the changes everyone has committed to. With adequate and consistent support, change will "take" and last. Without it, you can expect anxiety, cynicism, and a major retreat to the status quo.

• • •

These five bases make up the chemistry needed for successful change to occur. Leave an element out and the necessary chemistry is destroyed.

- Without purpose your learning community lacks the *reason* to change;
- Without vision it lacks a clear *road map* for change;
- Without ownership it lacks the *commitment* needed for change to succeed;
- Without capacity it lacks the *ability* to succeed; and
- Without support it lacks the *opportunity* to succeed.

The Essential Components of an Empowering Learning Community

The question then is: How do you establish these bases of paradigm change? Some districts already have these powerful conditions for change in place; others do not. But any district that intends to become an Empowering Learning Community must establish and continuously strengthen these bases of change.

The four major operating components of a learning community, their twelve key operating elements, and the design dynamic that governs them are shown in Figure 6.1 on page 101.

The first three components — organizational purpose and direction, empowering student outcomes, and the instructional delivery system — constitute a learning community's program structure. The fourth component — organizational coordination and culture — constitutes the support structure for this program structure. This support structure — governance and decision making, parent and community involvement, valued attributes and relationships, internal and external communication, and the accountability and improvement process — is vital in establishing the bases of paradigm change.

As the arrows in Figure 6.1 indicate, there is an explicit sequence to the strategic design and alignment processes described in these concluding chapters. The process has been used to guide the strategic

change efforts of both large and small districts in the United States and abroad (see Spady 1996b and 1996c).

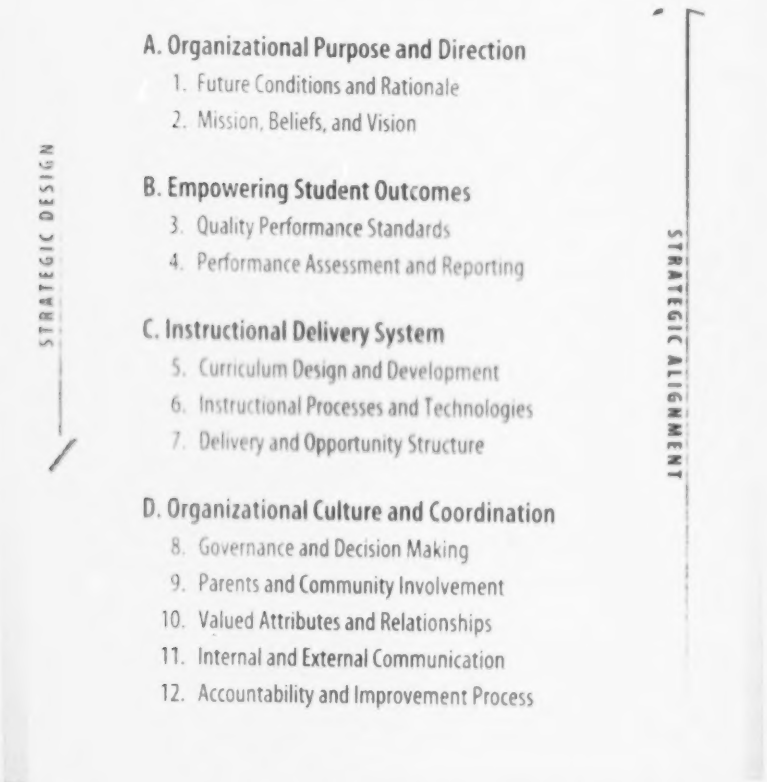
STRATEGIC DESIGN
A. Organizational Purpose and Direction
1. Future Conditions and Rationale
2. Mission, Beliefs, and Vision
B. Empowering Student Outcomes
3. Quality Performance Standards
4. Performance Assessment and Reporting
C. Instructional Delivery System
5. Curriculum Design and Development
6. Instructional Processes and Technologies
7. Delivery and Opportunity Structure
D. Organizational Culture and Coordination
8. Governance and Decision Making
9. Parents and Community Involvement
10. Valued Attributes and Relationships
11. Internal and External Communication
12. Accountability and Improvement Process
STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Figure 6.1 *The Key Operating Components and Design Dynamics of an Empowering Learning Community*

Both strategic design and strategic alignment rest on the fundamental premise that the design and implementation of a change process should:

> *Start with the end in mind and systematically proceed back from there.*

While that end is your organization's purpose and direction, strategic design cannot begin unless some basic support structure conditions exist from which to proceed. Consequently, your ability to establish

an Empowering Leaning Community will depend on the quality of the organizational culture and coordination you establish.

The Culture and Coordination of Your Learning Community

Any organization whose key members and constituents decide to pursue major systemic change must ensure the existence of a deep commitment to learning from everyone involved — leaders, employees, key constituents, board members, and, in the case of school districts, students. This is especially true when the change being considered is genuinely paradigmatic; that is, when established beliefs, philosophies, purposes, definitions, practices, roles and relationships, technologies, and intended results are all open to intense scrutiny, reevaluation, redefinition, and restructuring — which the Future Empowerment paradigm requires. During such a change effort, an enormous amount of new information, ideas, possibilities, thinking, and action emerge. All of this requires people who are willing listeners and learners, plus organizational processes open to and capable of assimilating, organizing, disseminating, and effectively using what those individuals learn to the benefit of everyone involved.

This represents my conception of a true learning community. Any other orientation makes implementing something as far reaching as the Future Empowerment paradigm close to impossible.

So what constitutes such a community? A key part of the answer lies in the five elements that constitute your organization's culture and determine how it coordinates its major programmatic actions. These five elements relate to:

- How you structure and carry out decision-making authority;
- How involved you get parents and community members;
- The values, principles, and relationships you encourage and maintain;
- The openness and clarity of communication among you, your staff, and all your constituents; and
- The formal processes and mechanisms of personal and organizational accountability and improvement you implement.

These elements directly affect and support your learning community's program structure — your organizational purpose and direction, empowering student outcomes, and instructional delivery system.

	Program Structure Components		
Organizational Support Elements	**Organizational Purpose and Direction**	**Empowering Student Outcomes**	**Instructional Delivery System**
Governance and Decision Making	→	→	→
Parent and Community Involvement	→	→	→
Valued Attributes and Relationships	→	→	→
Internal and External Communication	→	→	→
Accountability & Improvement Process	→	→	→

Figure 6.2 *The Connection Among a Learning Community's Key Program Structure Components and Implementation Support Elements*

These five elements of your organization's culture and coordination are vital to shaping your learning community's qualitative character and supporting your program structure. Let's look at each element and its relationship to the bases of paradigm change.

Governance and decision making. One of the major trends within the broader educational reform movement of the past decade has involved bringing decision making closer to those most affected by the decisions. In the main this has meant more involvement and input from principals, teachers, students, and parents and less from

legislators, policymakers, and administrators farther removed from the classroom. While as many negatives as positives are inherent in this trend, three key issues surround any governance and decision-making model and directly affect the implementation of any learning community's paradigm transformation effort.

1. Are those authorized to make decisions in your learning community directly responsible for what results from their decisions? What form should that accountability/responsibility take?

2. Are those currently authorized to make decisions better qualified/ informed about the matters at hand than those in other positions or roles? What criteria and assumptions are used in addressing and answering this question?

3. Does the current system of decision making directly support how well your learning community functions and achieves its declared purpose and intended results? If not, what is the justification for keeping it, and what system would be more effective and productive?

Governance and decision making is ultimately about influence and control. Those who have it determine policies, procedures, formal priorities, rules and regulations, guidelines, and resource allocations that directly shape and affect everything you do. While it may not be easy to determine who "deserves" to have it, and who benefits most from it (and in what way), learning communities must remember that ownership and support for their change efforts hang directly in the balance.

Parent and community involvement. Parent and community involvement directly affects the substance and success of all three of your major operating components. The real-world perspectives and expertise many parents and community members bring to your strategic design process expands the range of ideas under consideration. These ideas shape the elements in your organizational purpose and direction and your empowering student outcomes components. Furthermore, they can be invaluable resources in enhancing your instructional delivery system's effectiveness.

Parents, experts, and community members can also play a positive role in all other elements of organizational culture and coordination. They can play a positive role in your learning community's governance and decision-making mechanisms; in contributing to the valued attributes and relationships that define its character, ethos, and culture; in supporting strong internal and external communication; and in shaping and contributing to your accountability and improvement process.

With community constituents heavily involved in your paradigm transformation, you gain badly needed external vision, ownership, capacity, and support for future empowerment. Without their involvement, the worst can happen, as we saw in the early '90s.

Valued attributes and relationships. At its essence, the valued attributes and relationships component is about the climate and culture of your learning community and its recognized purpose for existing. Valued attributes and relationships are directly reflected in the statement: How we do business around here — especially when no one is looking!

Climate and culture are reflected in your organization's publicly embraced values, beliefs, and principles; they determine which attributes and actions of people in the organization get honored and accepted without complaint. They're also reflected in the expectations that underlie your major decisions and procedures, and in:

- Who has influence and who doesn't;
- Who usually enjoys special consideration, and who routinely is ignored;
- Who initiates improvements, and who blocks them;
- The prime topics of discussion among staff in the lounge;
- Whether cliques and factions exist among the staff;
- Whether recognition and support, or the cold shoulder, is given to staff who do an exceptional job;
- The response given to those who spend extra time and effort with students, and to those who vanish at the end of the school day; and

- The response staff have to professional development opportunities, parent involvement, and professional accountability.

All these factors are indicators of the qualitative character, professionalism, and ethos of your staff and the overall health of your learning community. Consequently, nothing is more important to the success of your paradigm transformation effort than cultivating a core set of values, beliefs, and principles (see Chapter 7). They will be your moral foundation, and will affect both the success of your change effort and the ethos that operates in your classrooms. Without them, purpose is poorly implemented, and change and improvement are frustrating ordeals.

Internal and external communication. In many respects, effective communication is the glue that holds any organizational process together. It is the key to feeling:

- Included or excluded.
- Well informed or "in the dark."
- Treated honestly or manipulated.
- Empowered or powerless.
- Involved or ignored.
- On the "inside" or on the "outside."

Accurate or not, the perceptions staff, students, parents, and other community stakeholders hold about the frequency, adequacy, and accuracy of information they receive pertinent to their interests is vital. Therefore, initiating a paradigm transformation process requires that you enlist suggestions from as many people as possible about how to communicate effectively. The more proactive you are at the outset, the less trouble you will face later on. And the more you think of novel ways to involve others in getting the word out, the more likely you are to strengthen your capacity and get the ownership and support you need. And, because even the most obvious things to you will not be obvious to some people, you may have to repeat and repeat things in the clearest, simplest language to have any hope of their being heard and understood.

Accountability and improvement process. The accountability and improvement process most distinguishes what Peter Senge (1990) calls "learning organizations" from organizations in general. At its core this process is about:

- Generating clear and pertinent information about your learning community's operations and effectiveness;
- Reporting that information regularly to all staff and constituents on a regular basis; and
- Using that information to decide how you can continuously improve what you are doing and increase the capabilities of the people involved.

Having a focused, consistent, and systematic feedback loop for guiding and tracking organizational functioning, effectiveness, and improvements is essential to any organization, especially those involved in major change. In the field of business this powerful approach to quality control and continuous improvement is often called Total Quality or Quality Management, and its major proponent, W. Edwards Deming, became a living legend prior to his death in 1994 (see Deming 1986 and Walton 1986). The accountability and improvement process is a critical mechanism for building and strengthening your organization's capacity for change and for aligning your programs, structures, and people to achieve the necessary support for change. Paradigm transformation efforts absolutely require it.

Although many schools are unaccustomed to regularly and systematically gathering data on how well things are working, informed decision-making and improvement initiatives require it. The work of Deming, Senge, Peter Block (1987), William Bridges (1991), Max DePree (1989), Kaplan and Norton (1996), Labovitz and Rosansky (1997), Peters and Waterman (1982), and countless others makes clear that establishing a continuous improvement process is a major stimulus to both individual and organizational learning because such a process strongly influences how people view and carry out their organizational responsibilities. Everything you currently do in the name of professional development, new technologies, and program restructuring can be imbedded, integrated, and applied in a rigorous

continuous improvement process.

Leaders must work with their staff and constituents to build such a process directly into their organizational vision, establish the mechanisms and feedback loops to implement it, and have organizational members take full responsibility and ownership for implementing it. Without such a process, your change effort will look more like technical tinkering than paradigm transformation.

The best way I have found to establish the ethos and mechanisms such a process requires is through what I call the Learning Circle (Spady 1996c). With the Learning Circle, you can help ensure that your organization works toward a Future Empowerment paradigm in a concerted way rather than through piecemeal attempts to move things off of the deeply entrenched dead center of institutional inertia.

Establishing a Learning Circle/Learning Cycle

Paradigm transformation requires that organizational members and constituents engage in an ongoing, honest search for the deeper essence, meaning, values, and possibilities that define and embody the organization's ultimate reason for existing — its purpose and mission. For many, this process of serious, collective introspection, self-examination, and revelation represents an exciting time of major focusing and growth. For others, it brings with it risk, vulnerability, and uncertainty. This combination of potential opportunity and threat occurs because honest discussion inevitably brings a host of sensitive issues to the surface, which include:

- Discovering what the organization really exists to accomplish;
- Waking up to reality;
- Looking beneath the surface of issues and problems;
- Acknowledging the unacknowledged;
- Shedding light on things long kept in the dark;
- Doing something with the information brought to light;
- Searching deeply for underlying causes, meaning, or explanations; and

- Becoming sensitive to painful organizational issues and experiences.

The Learning Circle encourages everyone to take a hard look inside themselves at what's true about their strengths and limitations as individuals, and what they can willingly and successfully contribute to defining and achieving the organization's ultimate purpose. When handled well by a capable and sensitive facilitator, this hard (and deep) look allows people to see familiar things in new ways, and to use those new perspectives to develop new ideas, consider new possibilities, acquire new paradigm thinking, discover the deeper purpose of making major change, try out and assess the effectiveness of new things, and recommend needed changes.

This is why you as a leader must make it both imperative and safe for people to confront and discuss what's true about the organization's actions and results, based on the best information you can gather. I strongly recommend that with the help of staff and key constituents, you establish a total organizational safety zone — a location, process for, and set of formally acknowledged and endorsed ground rules that directly encourage, honor, and protect each individual's right to discuss sensitive issues and feelings openly and honestly without fear of criticism, censure, or recrimination. Otherwise, potentially embarrassing information, serious introspection, and the open expression of ideas, values, and feelings can be too easily pooh-poohed or negatively exploited by those less sensitive to their essential role in fostering paradigm transformation.

With such a zone in place, the Learning Circle process allows the members of your learning community to perceive, acknowledge, and eventually move beyond a familiar, comfortable, but stagnant dead center that inhibited the organization's effectiveness and diminished their integrity and well-being as individuals. That break from the psychological and behavioral inertia that pervades so many organizations ultimately allows staff and constituents to overtly acknowledge that: "Something different and better is needed here, and we'd better start searching for what it is!"

The Learning Cycle process involves five continuously cycling stages of learning and doing that occur as groups encounter new informa-

tion and ideas (see Figure 6.3). These stages are awareness, acknowledgment, assimilation, application, and assessment.

Figure 6.3 *An Empowering Learning Cycle*

Awareness — The opening up of intellectual, emotional, and physical perception and the conscious recognition of new knowledge, experience, and insight. Awareness leads to:

Acknowledgment — The conscious acceptance, expression, and description of the new experience or insight that has occurred. Acknowledgment, in turn, leads to:

Assimilation — The continual linking or incorporation of acknowledged experiences or insights with existing knowledge, abilities, and experience. Assimilation, in turn, leads to:

Application — The conscious and deliberate use of the new learning in activities of consequence to the learner. Application, in turn, leads to:

Assessment — The conscious monitoring of the results or consequences of applying the new

learning in a variety of situations that leads to new awareness and the continued repetition of this cycle. Assessment, in turn, provides new information and Awareness, which starts the Cycle anew.

While there is nothing dramatically different about this cycle and other learning models, the key to its effectiveness for you and your learning community is its simplicity and ease of implementation. To make it work to greatest advantage you must formalize it — that is, explicitly discuss and use its components as you work with the new information that the Learning Circle and your accountability and improvement process will continuously generate.

Once it becomes okay for everyone to learn, acknowledge what they have learned, and translate it into new decisions and action that themselves offer new opportunities to learn, you will be well on your way to establishing an authentic learning community. And with that the Future Empowerment paradigm will not be far behind.

Concluding Thoughts on Establishing an Empowering Learning Community

My work over the past several years has helped me draw three conclusions about the issues presented in this book. First, the need for and logic of the Future Empowerment paradigm described here has not been diminished by the political events of the past five years. The only thing that has diminished is the willingness of policymakers to acknowledge and act on the ideas and possibilities presented here.

Second, paradigm change of the kind described here can only be achieved by strong leadership at the local level; leadership that establishes the bases of paradigm transformation and their supporting values, beliefs, and principles; and that competently carries out the strategic design and alignment processes described in the following chapters. With anything less, Future Empowerment change efforts will never reach their full potential.

Third, the Future Empowerment paradigm and the concept of a fully functioning learning community are one and the same. Both are committed to and dependent on continuous learning and improve-

ment by all — students and staff alike; both nurture and advocate reflection, honesty, openness, courage, integrity, commitment, excellence, productivity, risk-taking, and teamwork — core values that make for a healthy organizational culture; and both are driven by a sound accountability and improvement process. That process, more than anything, is the life force that fuels the dynamism and energy of any organization willing and able to continuously pay attention to what is happening around it and within it, to redirect itself accordingly, and to improve what it is doing in order to be as responsive, effective, and responsible as possible. To me, this describes the essence of a learning community committed to doing the best it can for its students and constituents.

CHAPTER 7

CHARTING YOUR COURSE TOWARD FUTURE EMPOWERMENT

This chapter provides an overview of the first steps of the strategic design process. Your goal is to use the power that resides in the process to establish your organizational purpose and direction and, ultimately, chart your course toward implementing a future empowerment paradigm.

The logic and sequence of the strategic design and strategic alignment processes are simple. First, chart the course that reflects the future-focused paradigm and priorities you want to implement and the learning outcomes that match them. Then, develop and implement an instructional system that directly helps you achieve those learning priorities and outcomes. And finally, focus on strengthening the organizational supports that help your instructional system function effectively and achieve its intended outcomes.

How you develop an effective instructional delivery system and the organizational supports it needs to achieve its intended outcomes depends entirely on the paradigm you define and the course you chart. As you consider how to proceed, just remember these two basic rules:

- Always chart your course back from your ultimate destination.
- Frame your strategic questions carefully because only non-educentric questions will give you non-educentric answers.

Charting Your New Paradigm Course

Charting a course of paradigm transformation requires a great deal of organizational preparation. Figure 7.1 contains a brief list of resources you must have at your disposal and be ready to implement.

Superintendents need to ensure that all these resources are in place when planning major paradigm changes.

- A core team of facilitators who can join you in conducting this systemic undertaking. These people must have excellent communication skills and strong credibility with staff and constituents.
- The leadership skills to undertake the strategic design and alignment processes that follow. You and your core team will be leading both processes.
- A way of orienting all organizational members and constituents to a new mode of paradigm thinking and action far different from the Educentric Iceberg. Orienting staff and constituents requires that they become familiar with using new terminology, examples, and analogies that represent a Future Empowerment way of thinking and operating.
- A firm grasp of your organizational purpose and direction and a solid understanding of the empowering student outcomes components and elements you will be using to chart a sound course of paradigm transformation.
- The key questions that shape new paradigm thinking. These will enable you to build the foundation of beliefs, values, principles, purpose, and vision you need for changing your instructional system and its results.
- An overall strategy for getting all of these critical factors to come together. This is what the strategic design and alignment processes provide you.

Figure 7.1 The Key Resources Needed for Charting a New Paradigm Course

Recruiting a Core Team of Facilitators

Superintendents must be heavily involved and highly visible in paradigm transformation. Your credibility, interest, and commitment will be key to whether or not staff buy into the hard work that lies ahead for them. But you can't do it alone. This strategic design process requires a great deal of outreach, involvement, and communication throughout your community. So you need help from willing, able people from all parts of the organization and community who can deal effectively with new ideas and information, have high credibility with peers, work well with others, and communicate effectively. How many people you need on this core team depends on the size of the district and the diversity of the constituents you must engage.

This core team of facilitators must understand the fundamental whys, whats, and hows of strategic design, strategic alignment, and the five bases of paradigm change very well before you proceed with anything. They must also be thoroughly grounded in the whys and whats of future-focused paradigms. And every team member must be prepared to answer the countless questions they will be asked — some of which will be "loaded" — clearly and accurately. This means that you must provide core team members with front-end preparation before they speak in public. You also might consider recruiting an expanded team of people who can assist the core team with its many responsibilities. These people should have strong ties to the many constituencies in your larger community.

Building a New Paradigm Perspective

One of the fundamentals for making strategic design and alignment and paradigm transformation work is a way of thinking and conversing about the paradigm you ultimately want to establish. This requires an extended and highly focused period of building new perspectives about learning systems — one that may be very difficult given the deeply entrenched educentric views of many educators and parents' familiarity with the Iceberg model of schooling.

Be sure you lay the groundwork. The energy you expend to involve and inform all constituents about what you're doing helps move people from apathy to understanding to ownership. Without such a shift, change won't happen.

Three things work very effectively in helping others build a new paradigm perspective. The first is repeated showings and discussions for mixed groups of educators and constituents of Joel Barker's highly popular video "Discovering the Future." No matter how many times you've seen this video, its message continues to be eye opening. Following its viewing, your core team facilitators can conduct focused discussions around the things in everyday life that represent examples of new paradigm thinking and action — for example, things that are extremely different today than when you were children. These examples are powerful conversation starters with colleagues, parents, and community members.

Second, you and your core team can use the simple framework in Figure 7.2 as a way to break down current paradigms and shape new ones. The framework compares the basic difference between ends-driven perspectives about things (like schooling) and means-driven perspectives of the same things.

Figure 7.2 *A Tool for Generating New Paradigm Perspectives*

The Educentric Iceberg — the traditional schooling paradigm — is organized around the elements listed on the right side of each pair. The Future Empowerment paradigm is organized around the elements on the left side. When people consider how dramatically different these two kinds of organizations are (or could be), paradigm shocks of all kinds begin to happen. If these differences aren't clear at first, left side examples such as scouting merit badges, pilot's licenses, ski schools, and parenting usually start animated discussions rolling — especially when you ask whether anyone, starting today, would ever invent a learning system organized around the right-side elements in the figure.

Note here how critical the vocabulary is in framing a paradigm. Words, expressions, and concepts that make sense on one side of these pairings often don't on the other side. Take, for example, the popular word "cover," the ultimate poor substitute for "teach" and the antithesis of "learn." Because the left-side elements will become the foundation of your learning community's new language system and mode of operation, you and your core team will need to continuously point out and reinforce these differences and the words that do and don't work on the left side.

Finally, once people begin to internalize these differences and show openness to these new paradigm perspectives, they will be ready to deal with the key Learning Success and Life Performance paradigm shifts described earlier. To avoid mixing apples and oranges, start this discussion with just those paradigm elements that pertain to the organizational purpose and direction aspects of your planned change effort. These aspects include the defining shifts that appear in Figure 7.3.

From Iceberg Paradigm	To Empowerment Paradigm
Industrial Age	Information Age
Subject-Focused Planning	Future-Focused Planning
Calendar Defined	Outcome Defined
Aptitude as Ability	Aptitude as Learning Rate
Talent Selection	Talent Development
Bell Curve Expectations	High-Success Expectations
Stable and Familiar	Dynamic and Effective

Figure 7.3 Paradigm Shifts Related to Key Organizational Purpose and Direction

Here especially, you and your core team members must be well grounded in the issues raised in Chapter 2, what each shift means, and why it is central to the new paradigm you are establishing. This exercise expands and reinforces people's new thinking and encourages them to make these additional elements a part of their new perspective. Throughout the discussion, keep asking: What new possibilities would open up for us if we were to use the non-educentric elements from both lists to chart a new course for our

learning community? Keep track of the most insightful answers for later use and reinforcement.

Your goal at this early reorientation stage is to build excitement among your staff and constituents about designing and implementing a paradigm focused on the Information Age; maximizing the development of student talent, high expectations for students, and sound student outcomes that matter in the future; and becoming a dynamic and continuously improving community of student and adult learners.

Charting Your Learning Community's Purpose and Direction

Your learning community's organizational purpose and direction represent the absolute bedrock of your paradigm transformation effort. To give your planning and implementation effort integrity, you must involve all employees and constituents in addressing this component and its elements before considering anything else about a new paradigm. Why? Because successful practice and a massive amount of literature [see the works of Blanchard and Peale (1988), Chappel (1993), Covey (1990), Kotter (1996), Kouzes and Posner (1993), and Senge (1990)] say that:

Everything emanates from purpose!

With purpose, you and your colleagues and constituents know "true North" and can chart your ultimate destination. Without it, you're like a rudderless ship on a rough sea or an iceberg adrift in the prevailing current.

Here are the key elements of organizational purpose and direction, what they mean, and how to address them.

Key Operating Element 1: Future Conditions and Rationale

Your organizational purpose and direction — and the mission, beliefs, and vision that directly reflect it — all need a compelling rationale; hard-hitting and persuasive propositions and reasons that explain and justify what each is and embodies. That rationale can reflect an inward orientation toward what the organization has done

in the past or an outward one concerning its ability to respond to future conditions and challenges.

This strategic design process is firmly focused on the future, and it uses the future and the conditions your students are likely to face there as young adults as its starting points. It requires you and your core team to enlist all employees and constituents in developing a compelling picture of the future they believe your students will face. For that you will need to introduce them to "futures research." One resource is *The Shifts, Trends, and Future Conditions that are Redefining Organizations and Careers in the '90s* (Schwahn and Spady 1996), which is a synthesis of nearly 30 major futures books and other pertinent resources. (Also look for *Total Leaders*, in press, Schwahn and Spady, due out in March 1998 from AASA.)

Unlike most of the available literature (which focused mainly on career-related shifts and trends), *Shifts, Trends, and Future Conditions* focuses on arenas of living that give life so much of its meaning, significance, and beauty outside the economic sphere. As we tried different ways of getting strategic design groups to identify and focus on these other spheres, we found that we could tap a community's deepest values and priorities by having them answer what should be the genesis question of your strategic design effort:

Key Strategic Design Question 1:

In which spheres and contexts of living do we want our students to function effectively and be successful in the future?

In district after district, participants initially named seven key spheres as vitally important. Although the names varied, their focus related to:

Personal Life Work Relationships Learning
Culture Civic Duty Global Awareness

In 1992, a framework containing eight spheres was developed as a composite of several other innovative frameworks. It has received a lot of positive comments from both educators and non-educators and its eight spheres are shown in Figure 7.4 on the next page.

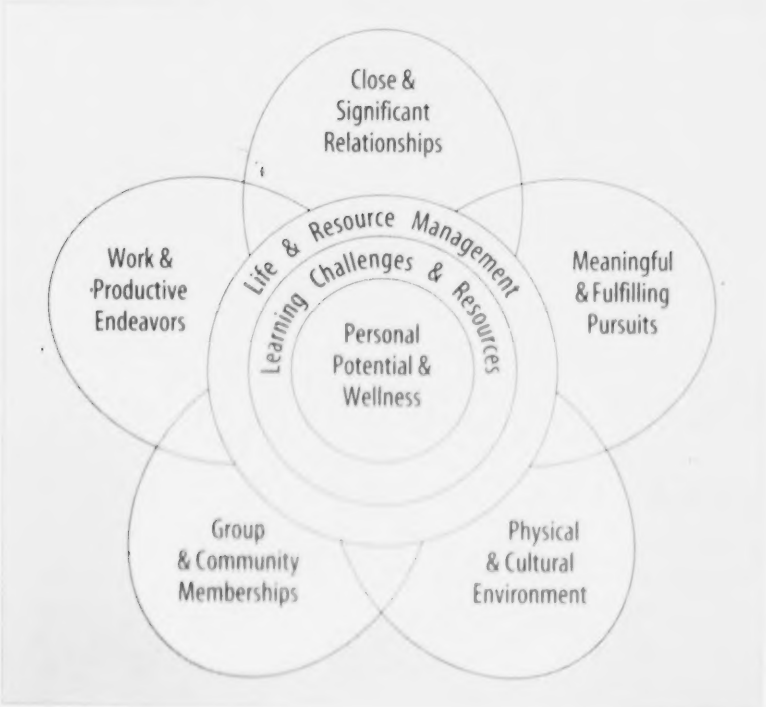

Figure 7.4 *Essential Spheres of Living*

This composite framework was generated by large groups of educators, parents, and community members, and has great meaning for them. Yet none of the spheres in this framework carries the name of a familiar school subject — a major break with the Educentric Iceberg paradigm. When allowed to address non-educentric design questions and work with frameworks like these, your constituents are likely to excitedly endorse this as the kind of education they want for their children. So remember that a spheres of living framework can be a powerful resource in developing a compelling rationale for everything else that unfolds in your strategic design process. I urge you to use it that way in your strategic design process, and as a guide to curriculum design (see Chapter 9).

Once your constituents agree about such a framework, they will be ready to address the future conditions your students are likely to face once they leave school. Our experience shows that when groups of

educators and constituents look seriously at the futures research, they quickly notice a major gap between the trends dramatically changing the world around them and what students are being prepared for in their schools. We have also learned that once participants have answered the first key strategic design question and developed a spheres of living framework, they relish continuing the process by assigning themselves to specific sphere working groups based on their interests, expertise, and credibility with their peers. Once that happens, they're ready to address the second key strategic design question, one that allows them to consider three kinds of emerging data about the future, namely:

- Shifts in the way things in life are defined and operate;
- Trends in the way things are changing over time; and
- Conditions that are likely to exist when today's (high school) students are young adults.

This second key question is deliberately structured to tap the negative (problems), neutral (challenges), and positive (opportunities) aspects of future conditions. The question is worded here to focus on data relevant to a specific sphere:

Key Strategic Design Question 2:

What significant problems, challenges, and opportunities are likely to exist within the _____ sphere that our students will have to anticipate, address, and solve as young adults?

To answer this question, the members of a sphere work group must read and reflect deeply about what the literature indicates about the shifts, trends, and conditions affecting their sphere. They should be encouraged to search far and wide for possible information and perspectives. Their goal is to answer the question by developing objective, precise descriptions of the conditions they believe students will face in their sphere as young adults. Their descriptions must be concrete statements about the conditions the students will actually face. They should not be value-laden statements about how the world should be or what students will "need" in order to be successful.

Once each group has developed its set of future condition statements, we usually have them present their results to representatives from each of the other sphere groups. This enables all participants to evaluate all future condition statements for clarity and alignment with the known information and data. Following this fine-tuning process, we formally acknowledge (and celebrate) that the spheres of living framework and set of future condition statements are the learning community's picture of the future for which it is committed to preparing its students.

The clearer and more comprehensive your future condition statements are, the stronger your rationale for defining your organizational mission, beliefs, and vision; designing and implementing a Future Empowerment paradigm; and deriving a compelling framework of empowering student outcomes that will transform your organizational purpose from philosophy into practice.

The discrepancy between anticipated future conditions and the realities of your current schools is the actual basis for your rationale. In effect, your rationale should be a series of highly motivating statements that expand on points like this:

> *Here's what our students will be facing in their immediate futures, and here's what they're prepared to do now. An enormous gap exists between the two, which we need to start closing now!*

This rationale should engender in your colleagues and constituents a compelling need to undergo a serious paradigm change process, one that incorporates your new spheres of living framework and future condition statements and that follows the course you began to chart earlier with your discussions about paradigm perspectives.

Key Operating Element 2: Mission, Beliefs, and Vision

Mission. Your mission is the formal declaration of your learning community's fundamental purpose, reason for existing, and commitment to its clients. In one succinct statement it represents what you stand for and are committed to accomplishing. Hence, every word counts. Your mission should reflect your new paradigm perspectives discussions, your spheres of living framework, your future conditions

statements, and your rationale. And all of the people involved in developing these pillars of your strategic design process should also be involved in shaping your mission.

Remember: Your mission should be brief, vital, compelling, future-focused, student success-oriented, and easily stated. If your employees and constituents have to look it up to state it, it's not a mission that is guiding and motivating them. Make sure it is.

Sample Mission:

Equipping All Our Students to Succeed in a Changing World

Beliefs. Your beliefs are the ethical foundation and code that governs how your learning community will operate and why. They are a succinct, formal declaration of the core values your learning community believes in, the principles and standards that will shape and drive your decisions and actions, and the premises and assumptions you and all your colleagues and constituents are asserting about learners, learning, and the conditions that directly affect student success. You should develop an explicit framework of these three elements and disseminate them everywhere in the district.

Sample Belief:

All Students ~~Can~~ Learn and Succeed, but Not On the Same Day in the Same Way.

As you formalize and endorse your beliefs, keep in mind that generating too many of them increases the chance they be taken lightly. Beliefs are your moral compass; be sure they are meaningful, powerful, and something everyone clearly intends to endorse and follow.

A review of the decade's most important literature on organizational leadership and change identifies 10 core values that prevail in organizations that achieve future-focused change (see Spady 1996c). These 10 core values are:

Reflection	Honesty	Openness	Courage
Integrity	Commitment	Excellence	
Productivity	Risk-Taking	Teamwork	

All 10 are essential in the moral grounding of the Future Empowerment paradigm.

In addition, 10 key driving principles directly guide organizational decision making and action and support effective leadership and productive change. These 10 driving principles are:

Inquiry Connection Future-Focusing
Clarity Inclusiveness Win-Win Accountability
Improvement Alignment Contribution

These too are essential to any organization that desires to operate as a continuous improvement learning community.

Also note that Chapter 2 lists key premises that underlie the Future Empowerment paradigm. Make sure you review and discuss this list at this time; its elements provide excellent starting points for developing your own framework.

Vision. Your vision is the detailed statement of what you want your new paradigm perspectives, rationale, mission, and beliefs to look like when translated into concrete action. Your vision must be a clear, concrete description of your learning community's long-term preferred future — what it will accomplish, how it will operate, and what it will look like when functioning at its best. The clearer and more precise your vision is, the clearer the targets toward which your learning community can, in confidence, aspire, and the stronger your employees' and constituents' understanding of, and support for, what you exist to accomplish.

Without a vision, your organizational purpose and direction remains abstract philosophy. With one, you have the tangible road map that charts your course toward paradigm transformation in clear and concrete terms, and the criteria for deriving a compelling framework of empowering student outcomes and subsequently carrying out a strategic alignment process that will give you a future empowerment learning system.

Organizational purpose and direction is the bedrock component on which everything else in your change effort will be built. Take the time to make it right!

When tightly integrated and aligned, as in Figure 7.5, the entire array of elements described in this chapter chart a clear and powerful course for your learning community that opens wide the door of paradigm transformation and future empowerment. Keep each of these important elements clearly in mind as you implement the remaining stages of your strategic design and alignment processes.

Figure 7.5 *An Aligned Organizational Purpose and Direction*

CHAPTER 8

DESIGNING EMPOWERING STUDENT OUTCOMES

Up to this point, we have discussed seven essentials you will need to have in place to design and implement a Future Empowerment paradigm in your learning community. The elements are:

1. A core team and an expanded team of facilitators to help you involve all or your learning community's members and constituents in your major change effort.

2. An ongoing dialogue, using the Learning Circle/Learning Cycle strategy, among your organizational members and constituents concerning the perspectives and elements needed for a Future Empowerment paradigm to take hold in your district.

3. A spheres of living framework and future condition statements, which have shaped the elements in your organizational purpose and direction and will further shape your student learning outcomes and instructional delivery system.

4. A powerful, compelling rationale for establishing a new organizational purpose and direction in your learning community.

5. A succinct, powerful mission statement that clearly defines your learning community's fundamental reason for existing and what it is committed to accomplishing.

6. A comprehensive system of beliefs about the moral culture of your learning community; its core values, driving principles, and fundamental premises — all geared to enhancing genuine professionalism in the attitudes and performance of staff and to facilitating successful change.

7. The seventh element — an imaginative and concrete vision of what your learning community will be doing when fully implementing all of the above — actually cannot be completed until you take the next step in the strategic design process, namely:

deriving from your spheres of living, future conditions statements, rationale, mission, and beliefs a framework of empowering student outcomes that equip your students to succeed in the complex, challenging future they face.

Translating Purpose into Empowering Performance Outcomes

Regardless of whether you call them outcomes, standards, performance abilities, results, or any variation on this theme, an inescapable fact remains: Until you have developed a framework of intended results to shape everything in your instructional and assessment systems, all your organizational purpose and direction elements will likely have little effect on how you actually end up operating.

A framework of empowering student outcomes gives you the concrete tool needed for redefining, aligning, and restructuring the elements in your instructional system. Nothing else does.

Preparing To Derive a Framework of Empowering Student Outcomes

Before jumping into the process of deriving and developing a framework of empowering student outcomes — or whatever you choose to call them — there are six basics that core team members and everyone they work with need to learn about what genuine outcomes are in order to avoid likely misunderstandings.

1. Outcomes are about student learning, and student learning comes in at least four categories: content learning (knowledge), competence learning (complex skills), moral learning (values and attitudes), and psychological learning (motivation and relationships). Be sure you can recognize the differences and keep them straight.

2. Outcomes are learning results. Outcomes are what happens at or after the end of prolonged instructional experiences. They are what ultimately "stick" and get carried out the door by students. Don't confuse curriculum details and test scores with these significant, long-lasting learnings.

3. Outcomes are clear demonstrations. Outcomes happen when students actively do observable things with the information, skills, values, and dispositions they acquire. Define your outcomes with powerful and significant "doing" verbs. Don't use non-observable verbs like "know" and "understand."

4. Outcomes are substance, not scores. Outcomes are exactly what their nouns, verbs, and other parts of speech define them to be; not the scores, grades, and other labels educators commonly attach to assessments of learning performance. Stay focused on the substance you want, and choose your words carefully because they define what you expect, and what you'll ultimately get.

5. Outcomes are the dog; curriculum is the tail. Outcomes must be defined and developed first. Nothing inherently belongs in the curriculum unless it supports the demonstration of a complex outcome. Be careful not to let the traditional curriculum tail wag your dog.

6. Outcomes should be significant and have consequences far beyond the classroom. Keep focused on the kinds of performance abilities students will need in their family, civic, and career roles, not on what is familiar about classroom instruction.

As a part of your orientation discussions, core team and extended team members must be able to explain at least these key reasons behind having a framework of empowering student outcomes (see Spady 1996a). Outcomes:

- Define the direction and purpose of instruction,
- Drive curriculum planning and development,
- Establish instructional priorities and focus,
- Define what the terms learning and achievement will mean,
- Motivate students and teachers,
- Determine standards of performance and effectiveness,
- Determine student preparation and qualifications, and
- Define criterion standards that students will ultimately reach.

To complete this discussion, core team members can facilitate a dialogue with their colleagues and constituents involving the new paradigm perspectives engendered by the Future Empowerment paradigm. Here they should discuss and explain the key paradigm shifts originally shown in Chapter 2 that specifically relate to empowering student outcomes and their two key operating elements: quality performance standards and performance assessment and reporting. These key shifts are shown in Figure 8.1.

From Educentric Paradigm	To Future Empowerment Paradigm
Learning as Mental Processing	Learning as Application of Mental Processing
Micro-Content Learner	Total Role Performer
Content Acquisition	Competence Development
Points as Achievement	Performance as Achievement
Bell-Curve Expectations	High-Success Expectations
Interpersonal Competition	High-Challenge Standards
Time-Based Credit	Performance-Based Credit

Figure 8.1 *Paradigm Shifts Related to Key Empowering Outcomes*

Deriving a Framework of Role Performer Learning Outcomes

Districts that have systematically used the strategic design process to redefine and redesign their instructional systems over the last several years have mainly followed an approach that emerged from a discovery made in Aurora, Colo., early in 1991.

When Aurora decided to develop a framework of exit outcomes for its students, it didn't have a spheres of living framework or a systematically derived set of future condition statements. But it did have a future-focused mission statement and something similar to what you would now recognize as a rationale for change, which contained a mixture of things resembling goals and future conditions statements.

With this imperfect grounding, a large team of Aurora educators and community constituents accidentally but systematically derived the first-ever framework of role performer student outcomes. These outcomes are about high-level abilities for carrying out complex tasks in a broad variety of real-life settings, and are closely related to what is described in Figure 2.2 (see page 26) as complex role performances.

Within weeks, districts around the country that saw Aurora's initial draft recognized in them a whole new paradigm of outcomes thinking, design, and implementation. They either wanted permission to use them — "No, you must generate your own!" — or wanted help in developing something like them. The outcomes paradigm had shifted.

What the Aurora team had produced was a set of five key outcomes that described the kind of performers they wanted their students to be after they left their schools, in whatever roles or situations they might encounter in their lives. They wanted their students to become:

Self-Directed Learners Collaborative Workers Complex Thinkers
Community Contributors Quality Producers

Following each role-performer label was the word "who," and following that was a series of what came to be called essential performance components — the set of performances and abilities one would consistently expect a specific role performer to be able to do. For example, Aurora's initial framework called for all their graduates to be self-directed learners who:

- Set priorities and achievable goals,
- Evaluate and manage their own progress toward those goals,
- Create options for themselves,
- Take responsibility for their actions, and
- Create a positive vision for themselves and their future.

What we later realized — and you should particularly note — was that:

- The set of essential performance components actually defines what it means to be a particular role performer. So, for example, if you could consistently do the five things listed above well and in combination with each other in Aurora, you were qualified to be called a self-directed learner.
- The "real" outcome is not the big label (self-directed learner), but the related essential performance components. The performance components define both what the role performer label

really means and what students need to be able to demonstrate successfully. What these components are, and how they work in combination with each other, are what determines the kind of role performer you have identified.

- Rigorously defining these essential performance components is the biggest technical challenge in the strategic design process.

What Aurora also discovered, however, was the intimate connection between a district's mission and its outcomes framework. Consequently, the district chose to place a brief statement at the beginning of their outcomes framework, which read:

> *We will know we are achieving our mission when all of our graduates are* _____.

In other words, the district's mission and the success of its students on what it calls its exit outcomes is one and the same. Hence, helping all students be successful on all of its role performer outcomes is the district's mission.

Before proceeding, take a minute to revisit the five Aurora role-performer outcomes on the previous page. Notice that (with one grammatical exception) they follow a consistent pattern.

- The last word in the pair identifies the nature of the performance role that is being sought: learners, workers, thinkers, contributors, and producers were Aurora's word choices. (Other districts have used some of these five role-performer labels for their frameworks, as well as the words citizens, participants, communicators, and persons.)

- The first word in the pair is an adjective that conveys the key qualitative attribute of that role performer. In the case of Aurora, self-directed, collaborative, complex, community, and quality were chosen to give a particular character to their five role performer designations.

As you consider these pairings, notice how much difference the adjective can make in defining the desired outcome. Imagine, for example, how different the essential performance components would be for

learners if Aurora had chosen "academic" rather than "self-directed" as the key qualitative attribute, or "diligent" instead of "collaborative" to go with workers. In both cases, what they would be expecting their students to consistently demonstrate would be very different.

Over the years, we watched design teams struggle endlessly over the perfect qualitative attribute word when no one word adequately portrayed what their students needed to become. So we adopted a rule you might want to follow: Use two qualitative attribute adjectives, but no more. Two adjectives give you far greater power and accuracy than one, but three or more start to become a meaningless laundry list.

With all of the foregoing in mind, here's the key question for this stage of your strategic design process and how all of the preceding relates to it:

Key Strategic Design Question 3:

If these are the spheres of living in which we want our students to be successful, and if these are the future conditions they are likely to face in those spheres, then what qualities and capabilities will they need to face those problems, challenges, and opportunities successfully?

In answering this question, design teams need to undertake a thorough analysis of everything they have created to date.

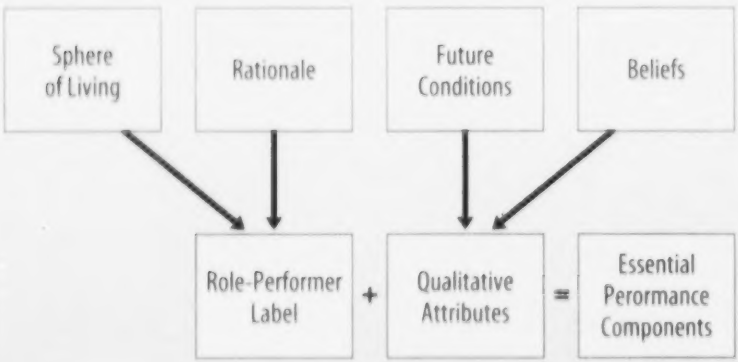

Figure 8.2 *Key Components for Defining Role Performer Outcomes*

- Your spheres of living framework and rationale will have a large bearing on the role performer labels you choose.
- Your future conditions statements and beliefs will be the major factors that determine the qualitative attributes you choose.
- Your role performer labels plus your qualitative attributes determine your essential performance components.

The acid test of how well you operationalize a given role-performer label is to give just its performance components to another group, and have them guess the label. If their guess is close, you probably did a good job. But if they miss badly, you've got work to do. As you tackle this technically challenging part of strategic design, keep asking: "How would I know this kind of role performer if I saw one?"

Another important aspect of what affects these essential performance components relates to the actual substance and issues students will be asked to grapple with and demonstrate. These, of course, will be influenced strongly by the nature of the sphere you are dealing with and by the future conditions students will be encountering in that sphere.

Multiple levels of role performer outcomes. We had just finished writing and reviewing the initial set of role-performer outcomes in Aurora, when someone in the group asked: "If these outcomes are what we expect from our high school graduates, what outcomes do we expect for 8th grade?"

Without hesitating, I responded: "The same ones, but done at a level of complexity and sophistication suitable for students who are 13 years old not 17. In fact, the same applies for students finishing the primary grades. We'd expect them to demonstrate the same outcomes, but at a level of complexity and sophistication appropriate for students who are ten years old. This means that for the first time ever, all teachers in the district will be working as a unified team toward accomplishing the same outcomes, regardless of their grade level or subject."

The silence in the room was stunning. But for the educators in Aurora, and for me as well, the Future Empowerment paradigm had just taken on new meaning. As we discussed what all this meant, several key points of agreement emerged:

- All students, regardless of ability, rate of learning, or age, could and should be helped to develop these role-performer abilities, which will really matter throughout their lives, not just in school.
- These complex abilities develop and mature over time, just as the children themselves do. Our job is to facilitate their development the best way we can — at all grade levels, in all subjects, throughout a student's career.
- These role-performer outcomes give teachers in all subject areas a connection to each other that they could not appreciate as long as they focused on the details of their particular curriculum.
- You can't nurture, teach, assess, or report these abilities in the same ways that you can conventional chunks of curriculum. A whole new philosophy and methodology of grading and record keeping is required.

Fortunately, the staff in Aurora was eager to pioneer the new paradigm thinking and action needed in all those areas. And, following their lead, what eventually emerged was a variation on what I call "The Performance Wheel," which contains an array of role-performer abilities required of competent adults in an array of life roles: competent managers, responsible citizens, innovative entrepreneurs, effective employees, conscientious parents, and so forth. An example of this highly useful and versatile tool, without any qualitative attributes or essential performance components (shown in Figure 8.3 on page 136).

Deriving and Developing Enabling Competences

The Aurora educators discovered what every district encounters in a strategic design process aimed at developing and achieving empowering student outcomes. They found that when you consider the spheres of living, the future conditions, and what people in the real world have to do to be successful in the Information Age on the one hand, and the way curriculum and school achievement are traditionally defined on the other, the match is very poor.

So what is the connection between the two, and how do you bridge the gap?

Figure 8.3 *The Role Performer Wheel of Empowering Student Outcomes*

The answer lies in a concept called enabling competences. Enabling competences are the building blocks of knowledge and skill that underlie students' abilities to do these more complex role performances. Some are developed in our current school curriculum, but many are not. What your learning community must do to make the connection is to ask about each role-performer outcome:

Key Strategic Design Question 4:

What knowledge and competences do our students need in order to do this?

Every time you hear a definitive answer to this question, ask it again about that particular answer. Keep asking and asking. What you'll eventually get from this backward mapping process is the set of baseline building blocks that determine where you need to start in your instructional program and where to go from there.

If you take this process seriously, you'll definitely find some of your current curriculum in what you develop; but don't be surprised if much of it isn't represented. The discrepancies reflect the results of applying two distinct paradigms of student learning and curriculum design to your work. One of them is educentric and, for generations, has been using subject-matter specialists to ask about the content they love: What should students know and understand about this subject that tells me they are knowledgeable?

The other is future-focused and uses a large cross-section of your greater learning community to ask: What will our students face after they leave school?

These represent two different design paradigms, questions, and sets of answers that don't match. The first is designed to turn some children into good students so that they can learn what their teachers know. The second is designed to empower all children to become things like self-directed learners, collaborative workers, complex thinkers, community contributors, and quality producers — or whatever local design teams decide is essential. Give parents and students an honest choice, and most of them will opt for the future empowerment course that these strategic design questions help you chart.

Designing an Aligned Standards and Assessment System

Once your learning community has defined a framework of empowering role-performer outcomes and the enabling outcomes that support them, you are ready to begin designing quality performance standards and performance assessment and reporting, which translate outcomes into operating factors that directly define and influence student learning success

Quality performance standards are the direct translation of your empowering and enabling outcomes into the concrete criteria that teachers use to:

- Target and design their curriculum and instruction,
- Formally assess students,

- Devise supplementary instructional assistance for students,
- Place/advance students into appropriately challenging learning experiences, and
- Assess the effectiveness of their instructional efforts.

These standards are not about curriculum details or everything that teachers might teach and students might do. They represent the framework of priority results that your learning community has determined are essential for all its students to achieve at the maximum level of complexity and sophistication they are capable of ultimately attaining. Therefore, standards defined this way are not the time-bound gates we are used to, which determine whether students should have access to particular curriculum content. Instead, they assume that students will be allowed and encouraged to progress along a continuum of increasing complexity as they develop the high-level competences embedded in your empowering role-performer outcomes.

Performance assessment and reporting represent the direct documentation of student performance on your empowering and enabling outcomes. The assessment part of this element requires that you:

- Create situations for students that directly (i.e., authentically) align (i.e., exactly match and embody) with your outcomes,
- Determine the quality of student performance on defined criteria related to your outcomes,
- Store that evidence/information in an accurate way that can be changed when later, improved performance warrants it.

This component is completely criterion-defined; that is, determined by the precise substance of what is stated in a given outcome, which is what makes it authentic. It is wholly different from the traditional paradigm of testing, scoring, and grading students on fixed but poorly defined segments of content. A good example of criterion-defined performance assessment and reporting is the merit badge system in the scouts. A good example of what it isn't is a semester grade — a vague label or number that represents the amalgamated average of a range of undefined and dissimilar things that relate to each other only because numerical scores have been assigned to them.

Criterion-defined reporting requires attention to substance and detail and ways of presenting information and evidence that directly reflect what a student has done. This usually goes far beyond conventional report cards and includes actual examples of work and non-traditional forms of documentation (such as photographs, videotapes, and other kinds of artifacts).

Key Paradigm Shifts in Your Quality Performance Standards

As your core team members initiate the dialogue and action related to quality performance standards and performance assessment, they need to keep three things in mind. First, the credentialing system of schools drives the instructional system (see Chapter 2). This means that how you define standards, achievement, grades, and credit strongly influences what, when, and how people teach. Second, the foundation for your performance standards has already been laid: it's your empowering student outcomes, and the spheres of living, future conditions, beliefs, and rationale on which they rest. Third, everything in this strategic design and alignment process is guided by the driving principle of alignment — things must directly match and embody what precedes them in a design back process such as this.

Armed with these reminders, your core team members are ready to address the key paradigm shifts inherent in their quality performance standards. As Figure 8.4 illustrates, there are six of them.

From Educentric Paradigm	To Empowerment Paradigm
Learning as Mental Processing	Learning as Application of Mental Processing
Micro Content Learner	Total Role Performer
Interpersonal Competition	High-Challenge Standards
Bell-Curve Expectations	High-Success Expectations
Variable Grades	Criterion Standards
Calendar Closure	Outcome Closure

Figure 8.4 *Paradigm Shifts Related to Quality Performance Standards*

The grounding for your performance standards is your framework of role-performer outcomes, which concretely embodies and represents your organizational purpose and reflects a dramatic shift from the

conventional focus on student mastery of segments of curriculum content. As leaders and core team members work with staff and constituents on designing and implementing performance standards, they must keep their framework of role-performer outcomes and the paradigm shifts in Figure 8.4 front and center at all times.

Note that as you address these shifts content learning is still important as a building block for improved student performance. However, content learning alone is no longer the ultimate criterion for the standards you are seeking to develop and implement. And as you begin using quality standards, remember that:

- Your standards should directly embody the words that define both the specific performance components that constitute each of your role-performer outcomes and the high levels of challenge described in your framework of future conditions.
- All students should be expected to meet these new standards before graduating — no bell curves or student-to-student comparisons allowed.
- Your goal is to document the performance of each student according to the precise substance and criteria that you build into each standard — no vague labels and variable grades allowed.
- There may be set calendar dates for the administration or re-administration of formal assessments, but a student's ultimate learning and performance on your role-performer outcomes is what matters, not the calendar date.
- Each student will have met your performance standards when(ever) he achieves or exceeds your performance standards. It's just that simple and direct.

Key Paradigm Shifts in Your Performance Assessment and Reporting

The paradigm shifts that establish a future empowerment performance assessment and reporting system are closely related to the shifts that drive quality performance standards. So as you and your core team members take this next strategic design and alignment step, both your performance standards and the underlying paradigm

shifts in Figure 8.4 will be invaluable to you; they are the foundation on which designing and building an aligned assessment system directly rests.

The major paradigm shifts that shape the development of your future empowerment model of performance assessment and reporting appear in Figure 8.5.

From Educentric Paradigm	To Empowerment Paradigm
Comparative Evaluation	Criterion Evaluation
Paper-Pencil Testing	Authentic Assessment
Points as Achievement	Performance as Achievement
Cumulative Achievement	Culminating Achievement
Permanent Records	Performance Portfolios
Time-Based Credit	Performance-Based Credit

Figure 8.5 *Paradigm Shifts Related to Performance Assessment and Reporting*

A quick glance at these shifts suggests that the nature and magnitude of the change needed here may be greater and more difficult to achieve than anywhere else in your operating system because they lie at the center of how the Educentric paradigm does business. The six educentric elements on the left are so familiar and deeply entrenched that they have acquired institutional status within American culture — their meaning and legitimacy are universally recognized. The dilemma this creates is that these factors simply aren't consistent with the empowering role-performer outcomes you want for all your students. Therefore, you will need to devise an altogether new but completely common sense approach to assessment and reporting, and it will need to:

- Be criterion-defined;
- Measure exactly what your outcomes state, which requires a host of authentic methods and evidence;
- Focus on documenting best-case demonstrations of student learning;

- Retain and record this performance evidence in its authentic/substantive form; and
- Award what we now call credit on the basis of what students accomplish rather than how long the course lasts.

So what do you do with the huge reporting dilemma you are likely to face? I suggest establishing and operating a dual system: One that accurately assesses and clearly documents for students, parents, and others what you have determined to be your most important empowering and enabling outcomes; and one that continues to satisfy the expectations and regulatory requirements of the conventional educentric system. Because your high-level role-performer outcomes and this aligned, criterion-defined system are giving your key constituents the substantive information they are seeking about student learning that really matters, your staff will eventually grow frustrated with the educentric approach's many weaknesses and attempt to make it more like your criterion-defined system. In the long run, your standards, assessment, and reporting paradigms will shift accordingly.

Remember: The rules and conventions that govern the educentric approach to these issues reflect a minimums mind set. As long as you give the educentrists the minimums they are seeking, nothing prevents you from using your criterion-defined role-performer outcomes to extend and embellish those minimums tremendously. At its core, that's what empowerment is all about.

CHAPTER 9

ALIGNING AN EMPOWERING INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEM

With a clear and compelling organizational purpose and direction and a framework of empowering student outcomes and accompanying performance standards clearly defined, your learning community is in a position to begin implementing the key elements of a future empowerment instructional delivery system. This final chapter explains what that entails.

Future Empowerment Instructional Systems

The three major elements that constitute an instructional delivery system — curriculum design and development, instructional processes and technologies, and the delivery and opportunity structure (see Figure 6.1) — are at the heart of a learning community's influence on its students' learning success. Therefore, I will examine each in two ways. First, I'll define each element and describe where it fits in the mosaic of a learning community. Second, I'll identify and explain the major shifts from educentric practice to the Future Empowerment paradigm associated with each element.

Defining the Key Elements in Your Instructional System

Curriculum design and development. Curriculum design and development includes everything related to the planning, organization, sequencing, and integration of the learning experiences students are given that enable them to accomplish your empowering and enabling student outcomes. Your curriculum design and development efforts should be guided by the tenets of a future-focused, outcome-driven strategic design approach, which departs significantly form conventional practice by emphasizing the following four major propositions:

1. Curriculum design and development proceed back from your empowering student outcomes, and ensure that these outcomes are addressed and developed on a continuous, increasingly more complex way throughout each student's career.

2. Curriculum design and development give at least equal emphasis to competence development as to knowledge building. Your colleagues must recognize that mastery of complex competences takes many years of focused attention and practice and cannot be organized and approached as one would a body of content.

3. Solid curriculum is defined and organized in many ways other than academic subject areas and nine-month blocks of time. These include a variety of inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary approaches organized around key concepts, themes, issues, problems, and life challenges that transcend the traditional disciplines and include the spheres of living and future conditions identified in your strategic design process.

4. All demonstrations of learning occur in defined contexts or physical settings, which may have a major influence on the knowledge and skills required to be successful. For example, consider what it takes to land a plane at night in a storm compared to landing on a calm day; or presenting a proposal to the City Council compared to handing in an assignment to a teacher. To do justice to your empowering student outcomes, teachers must design realistic, challenging contexts into curriculum and implement them regularly. This will at times move instruction and assessment outside the four walls of the typical classroom into the real world.

Instructional process and technologies. Your instructional processes and technologies are all the methods, tools, resources, and strategies used to help students successfully learn and demonstrate your outcomes and competences. These processes and technologies inevitably reflect and respond to differences in students' learning backgrounds (some already know how), rates (some get it faster than others), and styles (some need hands-on experiences to get it).

Here, as in each of the preceding elements, the driving principle of alignment takes center stage, meaning that what teachers and students do to teach and learn a given outcome must directly match what that outcome explicitly says and means. The following is a hypothetical example:

All students will…
Describe and explain to an assessment committee of teachers and adults in their community how each of the Amendments in the Bill of Rights directly affects their daily lives and their post-school opportunities and choices.

Here are three of several major instructional implications of this outcome that illustrate the general approach to alignment.

First, the students are going to have to be good at describing and explaining things — Bill of Rights or not. Therefore, describing and explaining and the subskills that underlie them should be a constant part of their learning experiences and actions from the earliest years on. This requires teachers at all levels to use methodologies that continually involve students in developing and implementing these particular competences, and to include describing and explaining as core parts of assignments and projects in all subjects. They might even place students in "describing and explaining teams" in all their classes.

Second, to become proficient enough in the content of this major outcome to be able to describe and explain it to an audience of adults requires students to be engaged with these ideas at increasing levels of maturity and complexity over a period of years — not just in a single unit in a single course in high school. If an outcome is far reaching and significant enough, it can mean that all staff at all levels in all subject areas have a responsibility for helping students learn the essential content and competences for demonstrating it successfully.

Third, describe and explain or not, and Bill of Rights or not, the students are going to have to be experienced and competent at addressing adult audiences in "high-stakes" situations. As with everything else about the competencies and content of this outcome, this will require a great deal of experience and focused practice in front of at least simulated audiences — something teachers across the grade levels will need to provide.

Delivery and opportunity structure. Your delivery and opportunity structure is the way curriculum, time, people, space, and resources — both inside and outside the four walls of the school — are organized and used to help students learn successfully. The term "structure" means "pattern." In its bare-bones form, your learning community's

delivery and opportunity structure is the pattern of how and when people interact around given learning experiences. For example, consider Perelman's (1993) analysis of the expansive learning systems available to us in the Techno-Information Age and the constrained structures of Industrial Age schools that prevail across the country. My interpretation of the differences he describes is summarized in Figure 9.1. The profound differences in these paradigms speak for themselves.

Techno-Information Age Learning Systems	Industrial Age Schools
Anyone (can learn)	Specific Students (can learn)
Anything (from)	Specific Subjects (in)
Anywhere (at)	Specific Classrooms (in a)
Anytime (from)	Specific Schedule (from a)
Worldwide Experts	Specific Teacher

Figure 9.1 *Perelman's Contrasting Instructional Paradigms*

Is your opportunity structure fixed, prescheduled, predetermined, and limited to one chance? Is it flexible, open, on demand, and recurring? Or is it some combination of these? The answer has an enormous bearing on the notion of conditions of success (see Chapter 3) and on whether schools expand or constrain students' opportunities for successful learning.

The closer the answer falls to the flexible/open configuration, the greater the scope and accessibility of a school's opportunity structure and the likelihood that it is empowering students to be successful using the broad range of instructional resources and technologies available to learners today. The closer it falls to the fixed/prescheduled pattern, the more it limits opportunities for learning success.

At its core, the Future Empowerment paradigm embodies and fosters opportunity-expanding conditions of success. The reverse is also true: Expanded opportunity promotes future empowerment. Thus,

future empowerment instructional systems define and conduct their essential operating elements in ways that expand the individual student's opportunities for success, both in school and beyond it.

Opportunities fall into four major categories:

1. Structure—the way time, access, content, learning experiences, and assistance are organized, sequenced, and made available to students.

2. Substance—exactly what is required, taught, assessed, recorded, and reported, which can open or close doors of access and advancement or students, both in and beyond school.

3. Process—the techniques, technologies, strategies, and alignment of instruction, and the methods used to document and report student learning and achievement.

4. Attitudinal—what is expected of students, how much encouragement they're given to succeed, and how much effort teachers make to help them.

Together, this mosaic of factors either expands opportunities for individual success beyond their current boundaries or continues to limit them unnecessarily for students.

Key Paradigm Shifts in Curriculum Design and Development

Virtually everything we considered in Chapters 7 and 8 provides an almost self-explanatory rationale for the eight paradigm shifts shown in Figure 9.2 (on page 148), which guide student guide empowerment curriculum design and development.

These shifts move the fundamental focus of student learning experiences from the content-dominated classroom to the-role performance realities of the real world. Your spheres of living framework, your future conditions, and your empowering role-performer outcomes give you a deep foundation of substance from which to plan and design student learning experiences rich in complex content and even richer in complex competences.

From Educentric Paradigm	To Empowerment Paradigm
Subject-Focused Planning	Future-Focused Planning
Calendar Defined	Outcome Defined
Learning as Mental Processing	Learning as Application of Mental Processing
Micro-Content Learner	Total Role Performer
Discipline-Structured Curriculum	Problem-Structured Curriculum
Content Acquisition	Competence Development
Seat/Classroom Learning	Authentic Context Learning
Calendar Closure	Outcome Closure

Figure 9.2 Paradigm Shifts Related to Curriculum Design and Development

This new paradigm is a boon for staff with imagination, creativity, and a willingness to facilitate very active learning environments. A curriculum structure that relates directly to your spheres of living and future conditions encourages them to simulate a variety of real-life challenges in their classrooms and to venture beyond the classroom itself to develop their role-performer outcomes. But this new paradigm won't be easy to implement for those who depend on the substance and structure of subject area textbooks and subject-specific materials to guide their instructional planning, and view their role and their students' roles in very traditional terms.

Beyond these differences in staff orientations, learning communities face another formidable challenge in implementing an empowerment approach to curriculum design.

The challenge is building ultimate role-performer outcomes into all content areas at all grade levels. Regardless of what particular content students may be addressing, they should always be developing and practicing their role-performer competences. This continuity of student learning experiences is, without question, the most unique and challenging aspect of this new curriculum design paradigm.

To meet this challenge, educators must engage in a systematic design back process that builds a framework of enabling (building block) competences for complex role-performer outcomes. These enabling competences will include many of the traditional basic skills that constituents view as key indicators of school effectiveness, but this process may also reveal the absence of necessary building blocks, so watch out for them.

This design back process probably sounds like a lot of work; it is. But if it sounds like wasted effort, consider the experience of an expert math teacher in the Chicago area who used it a few years ago with Algebra 1. The map of enabling competences he created varied so much from the sequence in the available algebra books that he only selectively used the books as he got a class of struggling basic math students to master Algebra 1 in one semester. He later estimated that by following any available algebra book that class would have taken two years to accomplish what they did in a semester.

Key Paradigm Shifts in Instructional Processes and Technologies

This element is the most vital to the learning success of students. In simple terms, it's about how students get taught. Its twelve paradigm shifts, shown in Figure 9.3 (on page 150), encompass a variety of motivational and technical factors that relate to the purpose and intention of the teacher's role in a Future Empowerment paradigm and to some of the processes they carry out as teachers work with students.

The first 10 shifts in Figure 9.3 all pertain to teachers' definition of and orientation to their role responsibilities in the instructional process. In their educentric form, these shifts portray a teacher as a provider of opportunities for students to learn the established content curriculum.

This passive orientation of teachers toward students and learning stems from a view of students as either having or lacking the ability and motivation to learn what is presented to them, and, therefore, being solely responsible for their own learning success. This orientation, in turn, directly promotes a monolithic approach to instruction in which methods that seem the most compatible with the nature of

From Educentric Paradigm	To Empowerment Paradigm
Aptitude as Ability	Aptitude as Learning Rate
Talent Selection	Talent Development
Learning as Mental Processing	Learning as Application of Mental Processing
Micro-Content Learner	Total Role Performer
Content Acquisition	Competence Development
Teaching as Coverage	Teaching as Intervention
Provides Opportunity	Learns Successfully
Learner Accountability	Shared Accountability
Single-Modality Instruction	Multiple-Modality Instruction
Content-Compatible Methods	Brain-Compatible Methods
Works Alone	Collaborates
Seat/Classroom Learning	Authentic Context Learning

Figure 9.3 Paradigm Shifts Related to Instructional Processes and Technologies

the content being taught are uniformly used for all students. It assumes that those capable of getting the content will, and the others just won't to the same degree based on their aptitudes.

The shifts in orientations and responsibilities that lead to future empowerment begin with a different conception of learners as capable of learning, but perhaps not always at the same rate and also, perhaps, not always via the same approach. This, in turn, opens up a totally different set of possibilities, all linked to Benjamin Bloom's early notion of Teaching as Intervention: An active, shared accountability role that can unlock successful learning that might not otherwise emerge by using a variety of appropriate methods and strategies.

The multiple-modality/brain-compatible methods and collaborative, authentic learning contexts shown in Figure 9.3 are the natural instructional vehicles when learning is viewed as the application of mental processing rather than mental processing alone, and the student is viewed as a total role performer rather than a learner of content. When you combine all of these factors, it becomes clear that teachers can and do make an important difference in future empowerment.

This is a picture and message that leaders and core teams must continuously carry throughout their learning communities as they translate strategic design and alignment into strategic action.

Key Paradigm Shifts in Delivery and Opportunity Structure

The differences that individual teachers can make in student learning success are, however, magnified or diminished significantly by the structures in which they work. When teachers and principals feel unduly constrained and frustrated by the organizational arrangements in which they find themselves, they often refer to these structures as "the system." It is your job to remind them that well-intentioned people in the past created this system because it offered an alternative to what at the time appeared to be an even more negative set of conditions. And if that system has outworn its usefulness and is limiting staff and student success, it is now the role of today's informed educators and constituents to create a system that empowers them and their students.

Figure 9.4 lists nine factors that influence the nature of the structures that either constrain or expand student and staff opportunities for success — a learning community's key conditions of success.

From Educentric Paradigm	To Empowerment Paradigm
Industrial Age	Information Age
Calendar Defined	Outcome Defined
Fixed Time Opportunity	Expanded Opportunity
Structured Pacing	Continuous Challenge
Works Alone	Collaborates
Seat/Classroom Learning	Authentic Context Learning
Stable and Familiar	Dynamic and Effective
Provides Opportunity	Learns Successfully
Calendar Closure	Outcome Closure

Figure 9.4 *Paradigm Shifts Related to Delivery and Opportunity Structures*

As you and your core team members discuss these nine sets of factors with your learning community, keep the picture of Perelman's contrasting instructional paradigms in Figure 9.1 front and center and use it to remind everyone of how limiting a schedule-driven, self-contained/self-constrained classroom can be if students' success as role performers is their goal.

As a paradigm-breaking exercise, you might remind your staff and constituents that there are about 1,000 hours of scheduled instructional time available in each school year, and ask them to suggest ways that those 1,000 could be used smarter and better to achieve your empowering student outcomes. Then have them multiply 1,000 by the number of full-time equivalent teachers, assistants, and volunteers you have available in any given building and suggest ways that those many thousands of hours could be used smarter and better to accomplish your outcomes. Finally, have them multiply the number of students in a given building by 1,000 and ask the same question about those hundreds of thousands of hours.

I have found that the number of paradigm-breaking answers that emerge from this simple exercise surprises everyone. Leaders need only consolidate them into a workable plan for restructuring their instructional system, continuously acknowledging that the ideas belong to everyone involved in the strategic design and alignment processes.

Sustaining Your Paradigm Transformation Effort

You can do three things in addition to devoting unwavering attention to aligning everything in your organization with your declared organizational purpose and your empowering student outcomes to sustain the vitality and impact of your paradigm transformation effort. You can (and should): Extend your strategic design and alignment process; use your foundation of performance criteria to foster continuous organizational improvement; and use the Learning Circle/Learning Cycle strategy (see Chapter 6) to foster a culture of continuous personal and organizational learning.

Extending Your Strategic Design and Alignment Processes

To sustain momentum established for paradigm transformation, you must periodically update and realign your organizational purpose and direction, your empowering student outcomes, and all the elements in your instructional delivery system. Continued attention transforms strategic design and strategic alignment from events (or simply an initial stage in your paradigm transformation effort) to working tools that you can continuously use to monitor changes in the shifts, trends, and future conditions your students will encounter once they leave school, and your students' experiences and successes as they encounter those conditions in their post-school lives.

By carrying out this kind of external information search, you can keep abreast of what lies ahead for your students and of how well your instructional efforts are accomplishing their intended purposes. You'll also prevent initial changes in your organization from calcifying and taking on a life of their own. Continually monitoring the external environment means encountering new information, which, in turn, means refining changes you initially implemented. This will help you remain future-focused and attentive to the results that matter most: The postschool successes of your students.

Using Your Foundation of Performance Criteria to Improve

The second key thing you must do to sustain your paradigm transformation process is to systematically use all the data you gather in your performance assessment and reporting efforts to drive your accountability and improvement process. Schools become empowering learning communities when the most important factors in organizational decision making are their students' learning results, and their success in implementing their organizational vision — their ideal picture of how they will be operating at their best. Both need to become the central criteria on which you regularly assess your actions and effectiveness and on which you make decisions about programs, staff, and students.

Remember, you don't undertake strategic design just to have a lot of nice paper to show to your staff and constituents. Through it you build the bedrock criteria on which your learning community will operate, so use it that way in your accountability and improvement

process. This enables you to foster a continuous improvement way of doing business that develops and empowers everyone to improve as a continuous learner and performer; creates and uses feedback loops to improve decision making and performance; supports and manages your organization's purpose and vision; restructures your organization to achieve future empowerment; rewards the positive contributions of employees toward achieving your purpose and vision; and expands your organization's capacity to perform effectively in a world of constant technological and structural change.

Using Your Learning Circle/Learning Cycle Strategy

The third thing you must do to make continuous improvement and future empowerment a way of life in your learning community is to consistently and systematically use the Learning Circle/Learning Cycle strategy (see Chapter 6). This, more than anything else, will send the message that learning and improving are what your schools are all about.

As you review the Learning Cycle, keep in mind that its most powerful element is acknowledgment — the conscious acceptance, expression, and description of the new learning that has occurred. When colleagues openly acknowledge what they have learned, they also openly acknowledge that learning is important in the organization. Honest acknowledgment of this kind is the clearest sign that the closed system orientations promoted by the Educentric Iceberg have given way to the open system character of the Future Empowerment paradigm.

Once this occurs, no one will want to seek refuge on a melting iceberg whose credibility is lost and whose days are numbered. Instead, you can celebrate the paradigm transformation taking place in your learning community and the role you have played in making it happen.

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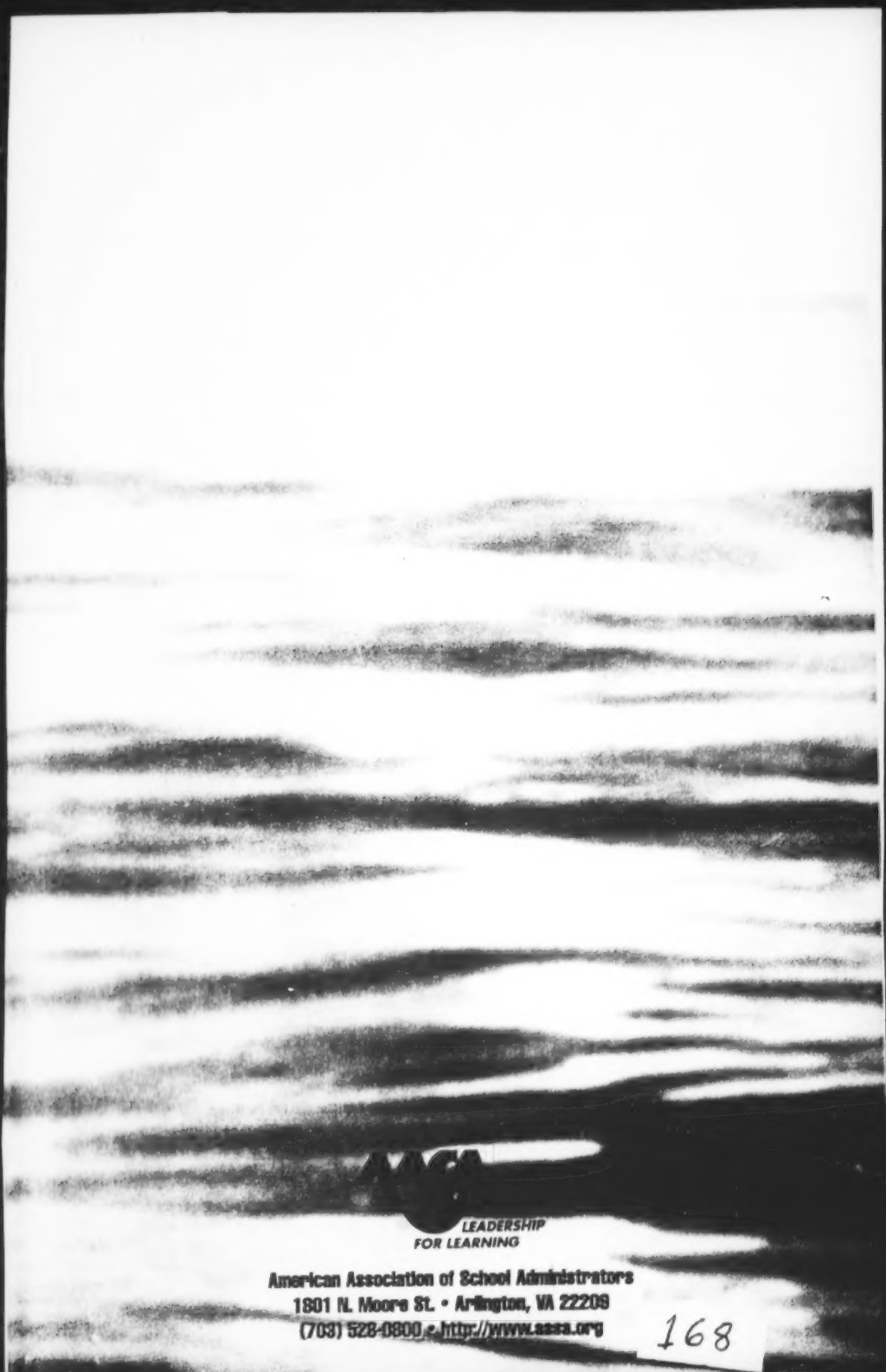

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